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# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

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## PLANNING INSTRUCTION IN READING

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A Symposium

THE PREVENTION OF POOR READING

David Kopel

DEVELOPING BASIC READING ABILITIES

Emmett A. Betts

THE ARMY PROGRAM FOR ILLITERATES

Paul A. Witty and Samuel Goldberg

WHAT ABOUT ORAL READING?

Milton Cohler

# The Elementary English Review

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JOHN J. DEBOER, *Editor*

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# The Elementary English Review

John J. DeBoer, Editor

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# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. XX

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## Recent Experiences in Teaching Reading: A Symposium

### IMPROVING READING IN SEVENTH GRADE

ANNIE LEE MORGAN<sup>1</sup>

Early in the school year I realized that my seventh grade group was poor in oral and silent reading. When I questioned them about the library books they had read during the summer, I found that only a small per cent had read any. The reading test results from the year before showed that the median for the grade was 6.2.

Soon I decided to try to find a subject that the group was interested in, and then attempt to help them collect easy reading material. Their interest proved to be on dogs.

Nearly every child in the room had a dog at home, and we began by telling our dog's name and in many cases why he was given that name. The children talked about differ-

ent breeds of dogs, and the countries in which they were found.

A child turned to the sections on dogs in the *World Book* and *Compton's*. Colored pictures and a list of several breeds of dogs led the children to want to read a description of each. A short story about a pup was found in a magazine. The class then began searching through their readers to find stories about dogs. By this time I had a collection of easy and difficult reading books and library books about dogs on my shelves. We used the Table of Contents in the readers and soon had a long

<sup>1</sup>This contribution was awarded first place in the *Review* contest. The committee consisted of Dora V. Smith, W. Wilbur Hatfield, and the editor, Miss Morgan is a seventh grade teacher in Fremont, N. C.

list of available stories. Some of the dogs in the stories had names that were difficult to pronounce, and the group was taught to use diacritical markings.

In a few days our bulletin board was attractively arranged with pictures of dogs. Some were famous paintings and others were pictures from magazines and calendars.

Several poems about dogs were read, and a number of interesting articles were clipped from the daily papers.

After a vast amount of material was thus assembled in the class room, each child read the stories and articles that appealed to him. In some cases I suggested an easy story for a child who needed easy reading. I gave definite

things for them to find out in some of the stories. The group improved their oral and silent reading by using material that was on their reading level and appealed to them.

At the conclusion of the unit we gave a program and invited the other grammar grades.

Our second study was on Jungle Life and I found that the children had learned a great deal about finding and assembling materials and using reference books. When at the end of the first semester a test was given the group showed six months' improvement in reading. I think the class made progress because they had read an abundance of material that was not too difficult and because the subject appealed to all of them.

### READING MATERIAL FOR OVERAGE PUPILS

BARNETT SPRATT<sup>2</sup>

G. L. and James came to us from other schools with reports showing they had done poor work in fourth grade last year. Jack had not been in school for more than a year, and had spent the previous six years in the first three grades of five different schools. We put these thirteen year boys in Miss Patty Jenkins' sixth grade with boys and girls their own age rather than in a grade with smaller children who had already mastered the mechanics of reading. The sixth grade has a larger than usual number of poor readers, some of whom are persistent repeaters. Miss Jenkins has won the confidence of these boys and has succeeded in making them "like school." She discovered that G. L. is very good in arithmetic; that James can make an accurate drawing of a map; that Jack is a good carpenter. She capitalized on these abilities and increased the boys' self-respect. The activity described below tells how she convinced not only G. L., James, and Jack, but other members of the group as well,

that they can read, and that reading is fun, not just laborious word-calling.

A number of discarded books, primers, first, second, and third readers were brought down from the stock room and the group was asked if they would make some little books for the first and second grades. Bright colored construction paper, a ball of cord, scissors, paste and crayons were at hand. Each pupil took a book and looked for a story he thought little children might like. There were blocks of art gum to erase fingerprints.

When everybody had selected a story the threads of the book were clipped, the pages lifted out, secured with two paper clips and the edges trimmed smooth with the paper cutter. Favorite colors, and appropriate titles and illustrations were chosen for the backs. Comments indicated growing interest in the enterprise: "I remember this story in the second grade."—"Here is a really funny one." "I am reading a good dog story." "I cannot

<sup>2</sup>This contribution was awarded second place in the *Review* contest. Miss Spratt is supervising principal of the Wiley School, Raleigh, N. C.

decide between two. May I make two books?" "I have a little brother named Tom. May I take my book home and read 'Tom's Hen' to him?"

"Of course you may," said Miss Jenkins. "Read it aloud now and let us hear how you will read it to Tom."

When this slow adolescent girl had read the simple story her teacher said encouragingly, "I think you can read it so your three year old brother will say 'Tell it again'. That is always what a little fellow says when he likes a story." Margaret's second reading was much better. Others were willing to show how they would read their stories to a younger child at home or to a group at school.

These simple stories would have seemed silly to these big boys and girls if they had been assigned as a regular reading lesson, but this was fun. The short sentences and easy

vocabulary made it possible for them to have practice in a type of reading not possible in books written for the sixth grade. They were challenged with a real audience situation and felt the urge to read well to interested listeners. Some for the first time felt the satisfaction of sincere applause.

Commendation, criticism, and helpful suggestions came from the group: "I like the way you changed your voice when you read the troll's part." "It would help if you showed the pictures as you read." "G. L. stood up and held his book away from his face." "Ella May, you needn't put on airs. It sounds better when you are natural." "Read louder so we can hear you in the back of the room."

The experience of taking the books to the lower grades and their use of them is another story.

## TRAVELING WITH OUR BOYS

MARY MEIGHEN<sup>3</sup>

During the school year 1942-43 one of our fourth grade groups was very much interested in reporting to their classmates about letters received from brothers, fathers, and relatives in the armed forces. The world map and the globe were in constant use as children searched for Aleutian Islands, New Guinea, Italy, Sicily, and various other places. In order to encourage these reports and to further interest children in locating countries and in learning something about life in these countries a large colored map of the world was mounted on heavy beaver board and placed in the room. The caption "Traveling with Our Boys" was placed at the top of the map.

Children wrote short notices giving bits of news from letters received from relatives in the war zone. The children thumb tacked these notes on the parts of the map from which letters were sent. Notes such as the following appeared on the map:

My cousin, Lawrence ———, is in the Coast Guards near the St. Lawrence River. He said he was going to teach the Spars. His ship takes troops across the ocean.

My uncle, Private Bill ———, is in Australia. He is a paratrooper. He has jumped 5,000 feet from a bomber.

My brother, Private First Class Bill Fisher, is a military policeman in Pennsylvania. He gets war prisoners from all over the United States and brings them to the prison camp.

My uncle, Corporal Leslie ———, is in the army in England. He has been in the army for over a year.

My uncle, Bud Fisher, has been in the navy twenty-three years. He is now in Australia. He went to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd on one of his trips.

<sup>3</sup>This contribution was awarded third place in the *Review* contest. Miss Meighen is elementary supervisor in Escanaba, Mich.

Material was kept up-to-date. New notices were posted as soon as letters were received. Children were very proud of their contributions. Occasionally snapshots of soldiers were posted on the map along with the news about them. Postal cards showing scenes from various sections of the United States and from foreign countries were also posted.

Naturally children learned a lot about place geography and they became curious about life in these countries from which the letters came.

They prepared a bibliography of stories about various countries using the books in their room library and the material in other room libraries in the building. A room committee consulted the public library catalog for books about these countries overseas.

Children were asked to recommend a list of books which they thought other fourth grades would enjoy. The following books in room libraries were some of the children's favorites:

Boy of the Desert  
Children of the Northlights  
Fairy Tales from Brazil  
Indians of the Pueblos  
Karoo the Kangaroo  
Lin Foo Lin Ching  
Little Lucia  
Peter and Gretchen of Old Nuremberg  
Sinfu and the Little Gypsy Goat

The following books are being added to the children's library collection this year:\*

Beyond the Clapping Mountains (Story of Alaska)  
The Boy Who Could Do Anything (Mexico)  
Little Magic Horse (Russia)  
Lucio and His Nuong (Philippine Islands)  
Mischief in Fez (Morocco)  
Panchita (Guatemala)  
The Spear of Ulysses (Greece).

\*These and other books on foreign countries are listed in the October issue of the *Elementary English Review*.

## THEY HATED (?) READING

IVAH GREEN<sup>4</sup>

Miss H——, a beginning teacher, tearfully told her supervisor, "My third graders say, 'We don't like books. We hate reading!' There isn't a picture book or a new story book in school. What shall I do?"

The following day as the third grade settled itself for a session with the hated readers, the supervisor "happened in" with an armful of new picture books. Miss H—— greeted them as if they were her particular gift. She exclaimed over the attractive covers. She read some pages aloud, chuckling reminiscently. She talked to herself (albeit very audibly) about those characters and that. An onlooker might have thought her unaware of the pupils edging ever closer to her chair, of their yearning expressions and reaching hands.

"These are very special books," she finally remarked, "so I shall put them on this table by themselves. If you wish, you may look at them."

It happened, too, that Miss H—— found an extra ten minutes each day to let all pupils listen while she read from the "easy" story books brought out by the supervisor. Some days she read a complete story. Other times she had hardly started one when "time was up." Then the book was put back on the "special table" for anyone to read. While at first the children just looked at pictures, as time went on they began to read, looking for the "funny places" that Miss H—— had found. Gradually there came a perceptible

<sup>4</sup>Miss Green is rural supervisor at the St. Cloud, Minnesota, State Teachers College.

change in attitude and in reading ability. Even the lessons in those detested readers seemed not so hard.

Each child had been reading the "easy" story books only to himself, until one day Miss H—— announced that Thomas had prepared a story to read to the class. (Miss H—— had discovered a story that Thomas liked especially well and had coached him in advance.) He did a fine job of reading and was plainly surprised and pleased with himself. The supervisor "happened in" and became part of the audience. Praise for the reader and for the audience was followed by the suggestion from Miss H——, "Perhaps some time you will wish to share a story with the rest of us as Thomas did today. You may practice it to me first; then you can read it perfectly to your audience."

There was considerable "conniving" by teacher and supervisor to get an audience for the "special reading day." The thrill of being sole reader for appreciative listeners spurred pupils on to new effort and to a feeling of achievement they had never known before.

Other pleasurable activities grew out of

the audience reading. Solo reading merged into dialogs and dramatizations. A thank-you letter to the children's librarian brought a reply, and the suggestion that they make drawings of their favorite story-book characters. When some of those drawings were later displayed in the college library, the thrill of such unexpected honor made the third grade forget that once they had "hated drawing." Carefully selected poems introduced by Miss H—— were hectographed so the pupils could read them in unison with her. Soon poems were the usual thing on "special reading days."

"What books would you like to have to keep on your bookshelves?" the third grade was asked. Their favorites were listed. Then they had the additional pleasure of selecting others from READING FOR FUN. When the books arrived, they were arrayed with impressive ceremony on the newly-painted bookshelves. Showing them in pride to the supervisor, the library committee said, "These are our *very own* books. We shall read them all this year, and next year we shall have some more new ones. We're so glad we got them. We *love* to read!"

## WORDS, TOO, ARE WONDERFUL

JOHN H. TREANOR<sup>5</sup>

Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* has for many years been one of the standard books in elementary reading requirements. The half dozen ancient Greek legends are written in a whimsical style, and for boys and girls are filled with an intriguing mixture of fact and fancy. These tales, too, if read by young people today, compensate for the utilitarian reading material that has so largely superseded the imaginative; and they tend to counteract by their fantastic imagery the prosaic monotony of factual reading in the elementary school. They should be included in any well-balanced elementary reading program.

But the vocabulary of *The Wonder Book* is difficult for both pupils and teachers. The former find it as hard to understand as the latter to teach; but a little foresight in presenting. *The Wonder Book* may easily avoid this double difficulty.

To attempt to solve the vocabulary question by the customary procedure of word-study before the reading lesson is not very successful. There are many strange words with formidable meanings, and they do not occur in the text often enough to assist the pupils,

<sup>5</sup>Mr. Treanor is sub-master at the Washington Irving School, Roslindale, Mass.

whose memories are overtaxed with a confusion of synonyms.

A plan for teaching vocabulary words found in *The Wonder Book* (applicable as well to any other text) has been successfully used in the upper years of the elementary school. Briefly, the plan is to select from *The Gorgon's Head*, the first story in *The Wonder Book*, those words which upon examination it was felt pupils of the sixth year would not recognize on sight. Two words from this list were taught each day, and at the end the teacher read the story with the class.

A careful study of "The Gorgon's Head" revealed 45 words which would probably baffle a sixth year pupil. (See list appended). At the rate of two words per day, about four weeks would be required to teach them. No intimation was given to the pupils that the words were taken from "The Gorgon's Head." So far as the boys and girls knew, the terms were simply words to be incorporated into a living and active vocabulary.

Two words, not necessarily in the order in which they occur in the story, were taught every day. A definite, inflexible five-minute period was used for this work. The words were presented as any good teacher would teach spelling, pronunciation, meaning, syllabication, attention to bad spots, appeal to many senses, actual spelling, and proper use. This formal and essential work occupied not over five minutes. The pupils were required to write each word in four sentences for a home-lesson. This home-work paper was in turn put to use in the vocabulary lesson of the following day.

As the list of words was presented, the new terms were reserved on the blackboard, being left there until the entire 45 words had become familiar. In spite of the objection that words should be recorded in phrases, it

was felt that since blackboard space was at a premium, the use made of the single words justified the procedures.

This growing list was intimately associated with every other phase of English.

In grammar there was a deliberate use of the vocabulary words as examples of the various parts of speech and grammatical usages. It is no more difficult to use an adjective from the vocabulary list than over-worked terms like "red" — "small" — and the like; and it is just as easy to teach subject, verb, and direct object by "The vagabond exhorted the policeman" as by "The boy threw the ball" — provided only the meanings of the words used are familiar to the entire class. The very novelty is a challenge to boys and girls. An important exercise was developed after parts of speech were taught. A noun, "tumult" for example, was transformed into the adjective "tumultuous," and then into the adverb "tumultuously." This was valuable because it enabled pupils to handle difficult adjective and adverbial endings. Also, the change of accent in cognate words, as in "dexterity" the noun and "dexterous" the adjective was found to require some attention.

In oral and written composition, the pupils were encouraged to refer to the vocabulary list on the blackboard or to consult previously-made notebooks. Far-fetched or awkward introduction of the vocabulary words was discouraged, but it was felt that in many natural situations use might be made of some of the words, with a pleasing as well as accurate effect.

Technicalities, such as "their," "too," "it's," and the like were taught one at a time early in each week, and were followed on Friday by a dictation lesson. The sentences dictated contained the technicality of the week as well as whatever vocabulary words of the week could be used sensibly.

In literature the teacher continually emphasized vocabulary words wherever they occurred. Even in ordinary conversation with the class, or in giving directions, he made deliberate use of these terms. The list reserved on the blackboard easily suggested the words.

At the end of four weeks, the pupils had acquired these 45 words in their active vocabulary. It was amazing how often opportunities occurred to use the words, and how often they appeared in books or newspapers, or were heard even in the school-yard.

No more exhilarating lesson could be devised than the reading of "The Gorgon's Head" after such a preparatory schedule. So far as the pupils knew, it was merely another story to be read. For the teacher, however, it was the happy result of deliberate and intensive work. As the story unfolded and the 45 words appeared one by one, like old friends, the pupils were not only delighted by a thorough comprehension of the story, but they were also elated by their own conscious power. They saw every word exactly as Hawthorne intended; for the preliminary vocabulary work gave a real meaning to the author's composition. This reading lesson was completed in one period, not much over thirty minutes in length. Likewise, the pleasure derived from

the reading of "The Gorgon's Head" supplied ample motivation for all the other stories in the book.

One interesting observation of the vocabulary program was that throughout *The Wonder Book* there existed a common denominator of vocabulary, if such it may be called; that the forty-five words from "The Gorgon's Head" occurred frequently in the other stories; and that the original work in the first legend sufficed to a great extent for all the others.

#### VOCABULARY WORDS FROM "THE GORGON'S HEAD"

humane	solitary	buoyant
enterprise	aspect	involuntary
craftily	diligence	transparent
elegant	approbation	dexterity
perplex	sagacity	tumultuous
exquisite	profess	gigantic
flatter	profound	exhort
snare	vivacity	venomous
ridicule	obscure	writhe
resemblance	loath	visage
contrive	mutual	metallic
image	harmony	malice
contend	inseparable	destiny
disconsolate	forbearance	reprobate
impenetrable	custody	vagabond

#### CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

VALINE HOBBS<sup>6</sup>

I find the time between Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays the best part of the school year for the teaching of reading. The term is well begun; teachers and children have become more closely acquainted; many mal-adjustments have been solved, or lessened, by that time; and the children are in a mood of pleasant anticipation.

On the first day after the Thanksgiving holidays, I read the children a Christmas story, which usually brings forth such comments as "That reminds me of a story I read," "I know

another story about a Christmas miracle," "Will you read such-and-such story tomorrow?" From these comments, I lead the children to suggest that we find all the Christmas stories and poems that we can. We have many out-of-adoption readers in our reading corner, a good library for the entire school, a generous supply of regular texts, and the children's own home libraries from which to draw.

<sup>6</sup>Miss Hobbs is a teacher in the Demonstration School of the Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, Nacogdoches, Texas.

# The Army's Training Program for Illiterate, Non-English Speaking, and Educationally Retarded Men

PAUL A. WITTY—MAJOR, A. G. D.  
and

SAMUEL GOLDBERG—CAPTAIN, A. G. D.

## *Background of the Problem in the Army*

Early in the vast mobilization program undertaken by the government, it was recognized that a manpower problem would exist in the country. It was anticipated that there would be difficulty in building the armed forces to the desired size and yet leave for important home front services those men needed in industry, shipbuilding, agriculture, and general defense work. To help meet the manpower problem, the Army found it necessary to accept for military service many illiterate, non-English speaking, and educationally retarded men. These and others, who because of mental limitation or some other handicap, were not prepared to pursue the regular course of basic instruction in the Army, were assigned initially to Special Training Units. The mission of the Special Training Unit is to provide the preliminary training for these men through which they will attain the required academic and military proficiency which is essential to proceed with regular basic training.

For security reasons, it is not practicable to indicate either the precise number of illiterate, non-English speaking, and educationally retarded men who are in the Special Training Units at the present time, or the number who, in the last two to three years,

have gone on to regular training after completion of the preliminary training program in Special Training Units. Some idea of the extent of the literacy problem, however, can be gained from the following statements: Data reveal that when the criterion of literacy is fourth grade reading ability, approximately 13.5 per cent of the adult male population, over 25 years of age, might be considered illiterate. The true percentage of functional illiteracy is undoubtedly higher, since it is safe to assume on the basis of experience that many of those who report more than a fourth grade education, are actually not able to function at that level.

## *The Program of Instruction in Special Training Units*

The program of training in Special Training Units is organized to cover an 8- to 12-week period. Systematic instruction is provided in academic and military subjects. Eighteen hours a week are devoted to reading, language, and arithmetic, and the remainder to military subjects. The program in special training is a highly flexible one, so that it can be adapted to the particular needs of the men. As soon as trainees have reached the equivalent of a fourth grade ability in academic subjects and when, in the opinion of their academic and military instructors, they are

competent to go on with regular basic training, they are reassigned for such training to a replacement or unit training center. The majority of men attain the required proficiency in eight weeks of special training. Trainees who do not reach the necessary proficiency in academic and military subjects in twelve weeks are discharged from the Army. An individual may be separated from the service at any time before the end of the 12-week period if sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that he will not reach an acceptable level in the stipulated period of training.

It is readily apparent that the time a man spends in a Special Training Unit serves both as a period of preparation and exploration. On the one hand, serious efforts are made to equip him for the pursuit of regular basic training and Army life generally. On the other hand, he is studied carefully to ascertain whether he has the capacity to maintain himself and perform some useful job in the Army.

#### *The Need for Academic Skills in the Army*

A soldier needs to have certain academic skills in order to serve effectively in the Army. He should possess sufficient reading ability to be able to comprehend and assimilate written directives contained in orders, bulletins, regulations, and other Army publications. His use and understanding of oral language should be such that he can follow orders and transmit to others, in turn, such directives as are entrusted to him. At times, it may be necessary for him to leave a written message for members of his squad. To effect a completely satisfactory adjustment, a soldier needs proficiency not only in language skills but also in the simple fundamental processes of arithmetic. He needs to be able to understand how to budget and spend his pay, the extent of the allotments he is having deducted for family, life insurance, and bonds, and how to

manage his financial problems in the post exchange, post theatre, service club, and so forth.

A soldier who does not possess such skills experiences direct difficulty in getting on and he suffers also a number of indirect consequences. He is unable to communicate with his family; and he feels inadequate when compared with other soldiers in situations requiring language. Generally, the morale of such men is low; they frequently display indifference to the training program. Sometimes, as a compensation, they show unusually aggressive behavior.

Through its instructional program, Special Training Units not only prepare men for more direct and effective discharge of their duties but help to make them more cheerful and better adjusted soldiers.

#### *Some Principles of Instruction Applied in Special Training Units*

Considering the urgency of the general military situation at the time America entered the struggle as an active belligerent and the extent of the mobilization program undertaken by the Army, it is surprising that effort should have been made to introduce a well-rounded system of instruction in Special Training Units. Yet, judged by usual criteria which may be set, study of the Army's program of instruction for Special Training Units reveals a broad constructive approach which incorporates many desirable educational features. Some characteristics of the program follow:

1. *Subject matter of instruction.* The material which has been prepared for the classroom is highly functional in character. It deals with episodes and experiences which are an outgrowth of the man's life in camp and the Army. It presents the issues and progress of the war in language the men can compre-

hend. Thus, it represents a fulfillment of needs and interests. The content of all publications developed for Special Training Units is analyzed by statistical and other means to make certain that it is properly graded in level of difficulty. Hence, there is demonstrated assurance that the material fits the range of the capacities of the group for whom it is devised. Finally, the material in the various fields, i.e. reading, writing, and arithmetic, is correlated so that instructors can easily integrate their instruction in one area with that of another. The use of functional, well graded, and integrated materials elicits interest and sustains effort throughout the course.

2. *Classification of Students.* The men assigned to Special Training Units are studied individually before they are assigned to an instructional group. These studies are generally made by classification officers or personnel consultants who have had training in psychology. At times they are made by assistants to the instructional staff who are considered competent. Information pertaining to the soldiers' past school attendance, occupational history, avocational interests, and intellectual abilities is available on their soldier's qualification card which is completed by the time they reach the Special Training Unit. At the Special Training Unit, they receive a literacy test, a unit test in reading, and an examination in arithmetic. These tests are intended for placement purposes, and provide the basis for determining to which of four possible groups the man will be sent. The levels of these groups are roughly equivalent to the first four years of elementary school instruction.

Analysis of the performance of the men on these examinations provides a diagnostic inventory of their difficulties and needs. It is then possible to vary their program within

the group, when necessary. Since classes are very small, their average size being between 15 and 18, it is possible to individualize instruction to a high degree.

Four unit reading tests, each built around one of the four different sections of the *Army Reader*, which is the basic text used in Special Training Units, can be administered to help decide when a man is ready to go on to a new section. A majority of the Special Training Units keep progress charts for each man in training. These cumulative records reveal the status of the man at any particular time and show the rate of his progress.

Classification of students in Special Training Units is a dynamic process in which every effort is made to place a student correctly, analyze his needs, record his accomplishments and advance him in accord with his ability to assimilate newer material.

3. *Methods of Instruction.* A particular method of instruction is not prescribed for use in Special Training Units. For example, in the field of reading, teachers are provided with instructional guides which utilize several different approaches. They are then permitted to select those methods which will best meet their needs. The material furnished is highly diversified and is richly illustrated. Many film strips and other visual aids have been prepared to facilitate learning of difficult subject matter.

In the classroom, material is introduced in a meaningful way and is presented so that it will evoke as many sensory responses as possible. Through this multiple sensory teaching, learning is facilitated and retention insured. Opportunities are provided for the student to use the skills he has acquired in a variety of situations.

To illustrate the eclectic approach which characterizes instruction in Special Training

Units, a brief description will be given of some of the methods employed in teaching reading:

a. A basic stock of sight words is taught first. This is presented through the medium of a film strip, in which 46 basic words are associated with their pictorial representations. In the filmstrip, *The Story of Private Pete*, which is projected on a screen, opportunity exists for necessary repetition of the words and for their use in simple sentences and paragraphs.

b. The acquisition of a basic stock of sight words is facilitated in other ways. In the *Illustrated Instructor's Reference* which accompanies *The Story of Private Pete*, the instructor is advised of other methods which can be employed to teach the meaning, appearance, and composition of the words. All efforts are directed toward building up rich associated meanings for each word, and toward developing the ability to recognize words at sight from their general configurations. A simple recognition test, built around these basic words, is provided in the *Illustrated Instructor's Reference*. Through the administration of this test, the teacher is able to select those men who are ready to proceed with the *Army Reader* and those who require additional help in acquiring a stock of sight words.

c. Section 1 of the *Army Reader* presents a day spent with Private Pete and provides for the acquisition of skills needed in the reading of words, phrases, and short sentences. In Section 2, Private Pete writes a letter describing his experiences in military training. From this material, the student acquires greater skill in discriminating between words and develops increased ability to comprehend phrases and related sentences. In the third section of the *Army Reader*, Private Pete gets

paid, and from situations related thereto the student learns to deal with language pertaining to computation, budgets, pay, and so forth. In the fourth section, the student develops higher reading skills by examining incidents in the life of Private Pete Smith of the Army of the United States. This section contains complete reading episodes which treat the backgrounds and issues of the war. Throughout the *Army Reader* there are different types of exercises for the student to complete. Thus, direct application is given for the student's developing skills and opportunity is provided for checking his progress.

d. A *Guide to Instructional Materials* has been prepared for the teacher and contains, among other items, recommended procedures for teaching the material in the *Army Reader*. Instructors are encouraged to analyze difficult words into their constituent parts and to find common elements in various words. Exercises in analysis and synthesis are recommended only for those words whose meaning is already known to the students.

e. Through various types of materials, such as a weekly paper and a monthly magazine, students are taught to read for details, to follow directions, and to acquire the central thought of a passage. Instructional aids are now being prepared to orient students in the technical vocabulary and concepts of geography and military subjects to help them in their comprehension of such material.

f. A recent publication, *Teaching Devices for Special Training Units*, describes many aids and games which instructors can employ in the teaching of reading, language, spelling, handwriting, and arithmetic. Diagnostic and remedial procedures and methods for each of the subjects are presented.

As can be seen, the approach to reading in Special Training Units represents an in-

corporation of the best features of different methods which have been recommended over a period of years by competent educators.

4. *Method of Dealing with Individuals Who Experience Difficulty in Learning.* Students who experience great difficulty in learning are carefully studied. The teacher consults with the personnel consultant. The personnel consultant, through the use of appropriate tests and interviews, evaluates the factors in the situation. After the study is completed, a decision is reached with regard to the disposition of the individual. If it is felt that he can be helped to make progress to an acceptable level, an appropriate plan of therapy is adopted and carried out. If it is decided that the man is inept and uneducable, arrangements are then made for a Board of Officers to meet to consider the feasibility of his discharge from the Army. The approach to the individual is positive and constructive.

5. *Teacher Selection, Preparation and Supervision.* Individuals chosen as teachers are carefully selected. A considerable number of the soldiers serving as instructors in Special Training Units have had college training and previous teaching experience. Many of the teachers have the Master's degree and some have received the Doctor of Philosophy degree. Instructors are selected not only on the basis of their academic qualifications but also in consideration of their interest in and ability to handle slow-learning individuals.

Once selected, teachers in many units are prepared for their work through local training conferences. The local training conferences are modeled after the two national training conferences which were conducted by the Development and Special Training Section, Training Branch, A.G.O. Representatives from each of the major units attended the national conferences and then returned to their own units to initiate improved

teacher training. Many Special Training Units have periodic staff meetings in which new teaching aids and materials are considered.

A program of teacher supervision is in operation. Teachers are observed regularly by the Educational Director of many units. Periodically, a supervisory "inspection" is made by representatives of the Development and Special Training Section under the supervision of the Training Branch, A.G.O. and the Director of Military Training, A.S.F. Recommendations for the improvement of a unit are contained in the report of the "inspecting" officer.

### *Materials*

1. *For the Teacher.* Materials available for the teacher's use include:

a. *The Guide to Instructional Materials.* This contains a description of placement and evaluation procedures for Special Training Units. There are suggestions in it on the use of *Army Reader* and *Army Arithmetic*. Brief recommendations on the teaching of spelling and handwriting are also included.

b. *Illustrated Instructor's References.* For each film strip produced by the Development and Special Training Section, a teacher's guide is provided. It describes the purposes and use of the material in the film strip. Specific recommendations for each frame of the strip are found in the reference.

c. *Monthly Guide to Our War.* This monthly publication contains suggestions on the use of material which appears in *Our War*, a monthly publication. This guide also serves as a medium for keeping the men in the field aware of new developments.

d. *Teaching Devices for Special Training Units.* This publication, alluded to previously, is in process.

2. *For the Student.* Materials for the student include:

a. *Army Reader*. The contents of this text have already been described briefly.

b. *Army Arithmetic*. This text teaches half of the fundamental combinations in the different processes.

c. *Newsmap Supplement*. This publication is issued weekly. It is a simplified version of the material which appears in *Newsmap*, produced by the Special Service Division; it contains news items on the progress of the war on different fronts.

d. *Our War*. This is an eight-page monthly publication which contains stories, feature articles on newsworthy items, a map game, a two-page cartoon strip, and other interesting material.

e. *Your Job in the Army*. This publication describes a number of Army jobs for which Special Training Unit men can qualify.

f. *Film Strips*. Five recent film strips deal with the following subjects: *A Soldier's General Orders*, *Military Courtesy and Discipline*,

*How to Wear Your Uniform*, *The Story of Private Pete*, and *Introduction to Numbers*.

No attempt is made here to describe the various tests and accompanying manuals which are used in Special Training Units, since these are restricted by the War Department.

#### *Success of the Special Training Unit Program*

The program of special training has proved highly successful in the Army. Most of the men in these units have acquired sufficient skill in language, arithmetic, and preliminary military training to be able to proceed with regular training. Thus, the Army is doing its share in helping to meet the manpower problem. However, it is doing more. It is demonstrating the possibilities inherent in a sound program of adult education. Application of a comparable program in post-war America should help to remove illiteracy as a national problem.

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# Developing Basic Reading Abilities

EMMETT A. BETTS<sup>1</sup>

"So much teacher effort is necessary to aid some children to recognize and remember words and to become fairly independent in reading material assumed to be appropriate for them, that the real reason for the acquisition of such a skill as word recognition is lost in a mass of drills and 'lessons', some of which to even an informed observer seem to bear little or no connection to a rational reading process. . . It is important, therefore, for the teacher to be guided by the larger purposes of reading in the daily work with pupils." Roma Gans (7, p. 3).

There is concrete evidence that reading is better taught today than it was a generation ago. Today more attention is being given to differences in capacities and abilities existing at any one grade or age level, to the broader goals of reading instruction, to readiness for reading at all school levels, to the selection of readable and attractive materials, to the preparation of teachers, to instructional procedures, and to a large number of kindred problems. Both educators and publishers have contributed to the improvement of the total reading program.

## *Two Approaches to the Reading Problem*

In general, two approaches are made to the problem of developing basic reading abilities: directed reading activities in basal reading textbooks and the development of basic reading abilities through every-day reading experiences. It is the purpose of this discussion to summarize certain facts regarding the basal

reader approach and to outline in some detail the second, broader approach.

Substantial progress has been made on the ways and means of developing basic reading abilities. At one time in the history of reading instruction, many educators bet their reputations on the development of basic reading abilities entirely by means of reading lessons, or directed reading activities, in basal reading textbooks. More recently, however, an increasing number of educators have been emphasizing the need for every teacher to become a teacher of reading. They point out that reading instruction must be given whenever and wherever the need arises. The trend then appears to be away from the over-emphasis on the use of basal reading textbooks and toward the use of all reading materials for developing basic reading abilities. Before this latter goal can be fully realized, more reading materials must be published for this purpose and the professional competency of all teachers must be raised. In modern schools, practices vary from the one extreme of complete reliance on basal readers to the other extreme of complete dependence on the incidental, but systematic, teaching of reading in connection with the reading of literature and the study of science, social science, mathematics and the like. Probably many good teachers make use of both directed reading activities with basal reading textbooks and of the development of basic reading abilities in all school activities.

It is essential that teachers should have a thorough understanding of the basic principles of a directed reading activity when they use

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basal readers. Most teachers can profit from the careful study of the manuals prepared by the authors for use with a given series of basal readers. Some of the principles of a directed reading activity may be summarized as follows: First, the pupil should be oriented or prepared for the first reading of a new selection by pointing up his background of information and by establishing a general motive for reading the selection. Second, the first reading should be done silently, guided by pertinent questions. Third, vocabulary and comprehension should be appraised and developed during the first silent reading and the re-reading. Fourth, re-reading—silent or oral, depending upon the needs of the pupils—should be done for purposes different from those established for the silent reading. Fifth, the follow-up on the directed reading activity in the basal reader should be differentiated in terms of each pupil's needs. (That is, some of the pupils in the group may stand to profit from the activities in the accompanying workbook; others may gain more from browsing at the reading center, arts and crafts activities, or other activities.) It should be clear—even from this brief listing of basic principles—that not all pupils in a given grade can profit from reading the same basal textbook. Some will be frustrated because the reading material is too difficult; others may find the material unchallenging because it is "too easy." When the basic principles of a directed reading activity are thoroughly understood, the teacher will be compelled to differentiate instruction by means of small groups within the classroom or by some other means.

Directed reading activities in basal readers, using small groups within the classroom, is one means of developing certain reading abilities. If every teacher in our land were to put into practice the fundamental principles of a directed reading activity on a differentiated

basis, reading instruction would be improved very materially. Another means of developing basic reading abilities that holds far richer possibilities will be described in the remainder of this discussion. The second approach is through the every-day reading experiences of pupils.

#### *Limitations of Basal Readers*

No educator is justified in placing complete confidence in the use of directed reading activities in a single set of basal readers for developing essential reading abilities. First, the teacher already has two strikes on him when he does all the questioning. This is the usual procedure when basal readers are used exclusively for developmental reading activities. It is a well-known basic principle in educational psychology that the learner should have problems to solve or questions to be answered; hence the learner should establish his goals of learning under the *guidance* of the teacher. Second, the skills, abilities, attitudes, and information that can be developed in a single series of books are seriously limited, especially after some reading ability has been developed. For example, location of information is limited to the parts of a single book and any attempt on the part of the authors to include instruction on other pertinent items is likely to be somewhat artificial. One of the goals of reading instruction is the development of abilities and skills required for the handling of a great many types of reading material. Third, the material in basal readers often is limited to one type. But the learner must be able to deal with the vocabulary and meanings in a variety of reading materials. Fourth, directed reading activities in basal readers emphasize intensive reading. Pupils must be taught how to best employ both intensive and extensive reading techniques. Too often, educators acquire a false sense of security regarding reading instruction after a set of readers has been adopted. While it is true

that excellent use can be made of graded reading materials, the reading needs of pupils must be satisfied by means of other approaches.

### *Reading to Learn*

Basic reading abilities are developed through extensive and intensive reading in purposeful situations. On the one hand, the meeting of a personal need may be met by the skimming or rapid reading of a number of references. On the other hand, a personal need may be satisfied only by a study of details that require intensive reading. In either instance, the *purpose* of the reading dictates the kind of reading behavior that is called into service. This means that teachers at all grade levels—including pre-first grade—and of all "subjects" must be concerned with both language and information.

A functional and virile program of reading instruction, therefore, transcends the limits of a basal series of readers. Any program of reading instruction that is limited to the use of a single set of text books is doomed to fall far short of the major goals of reading instruction. If used wisely, basal materials, such as text books and newspapers published for school use, may become the backbone of a school program, but children need to be taught how to use other learning aids and other types of reading aids.

In progressive schools the teaching of reading as a subject long ago has been superseded by guidance in reading activities. Reading has no subject matter of its own in the sense that science and social studies have; hence, reading abilities must be developed in functional situations. To translate this point of view into practice requires a reappraisal of the language program, beginning with pre-reading activities. In fact, the basic reading skills, abilities, attitudes, and information—as described herein—have their foundations laid during the pre-reading period. In the light of

this notion, the modern slogan has become, "Guidance in reading through experience."

Dr. Bernice E. Leary has this to add to a discussion of reading needs (15, p. 232):

"So far as the individual child is concerned, there are innumerable factors that influence his reading. How much do we know about them? Can we answer such essential questions as these: Does the child feel a need for reading? What urge sends him to books—to learn how to build a birdhouse, to arrange a stamp collection, to make a toy airplane; to overcome inferiority and defeat, to escape an unhappy home or school life? What is his attitude toward reading generally? Does he like books? Does he have a particular antagonism toward a particular book, story, or kind of illustration? Can he read well enough to enjoy books? What are his interests outside of books? What are his fears, dreams, wishes, hobbies, radio and movie preferences? What of his home life? Are there books in the home? Is the lighting adequate for reading? Has he ever seen his father and mother read?"

"Without an intimate knowledge of the child, gained through conversation and interview, diaries, anecdotal records, questionnaires, records of book withdrawals, and accidental observation of his unsupervised play and reading activities, guidance cannot be effective.

"To promote the reading interests of each child, obviously requires books, and more books—walls of books that overflow on desk, table, stair landing, and window sill; books that invite him to hold them in his hands, to sniff their leather, to feel their smoothness, to dip into their pages. 'Surround a man with Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau, Chesterton, Shaw, Nietzsche, and George Ade,' says the old bookseller in Morley's *Haunted Bookshop*, 'would you wonder at his getting excited? What would happen to a cat if she had to live in a room tapestried with catnip?' I should like to add, 'What would happen to a child if books in the schoolroom were as profuse as are the comic magazines on the corner newsstand?'"

In schools where differentiation rather than regimentation prevails, it is possible to continue through succeeding grade levels with the development of language abilities in social situations. Furthermore, basal textbooks can still be a part of such a program for the development of reading abilities. They will, of course, play a somewhat less prominent role than they do in highly regimented schools. For example, oral reading abilities should be developed primarily in audience type situations, and this doesn't mean in classes in which every pupil has a copy of the same book. In short, the emphasis should be on reading as an evaluating process and as a social tool throughout the reading program—from the pre-reading period to the end of the school career.

#### *Systematic Guidance in Every-day Reading*

In many modern schools, the instructional program is based on a series of units of activity. Even the biology teacher at the high school level develops his course around certain planned units of work. Since all teachers are dealing with both facts and language, they must recognize group and individual differences in control over both language-fact relationships. This means that the goals of reading instruction must be kept clearly in mind when developing an activity unit.

No phase of instruction should be left to haphazard treatment or hand-to-mouth planning. All phases of child development are given consideration by master teachers. Guidance in reading, therefore, should be systematically planned. Both teachers and pupils must be motivated by means of clear-cut goals. The teacher may have long-time learner goals in mind, such as the development of the ability to locate information, select, evaluate, etc. At all times, too, the pupils must know where they are going and why. Systematic

instruction is characterized by systematic motivation. Instruction is systematic to the degree that it is differentiated in terms of pupils' needs, interests, and capacities.

The systematic development of a unit of activity should keep ever before the learner the purposes of his activity. Stated very simply, the development may proceed somewhat as follows: What is the problem? What is already known about the problem? What do we want to know? Where can we find help? How can we find help? Who will find the information? Does the information answer our questions or solve our problem? How shall we put together the information; or, how shall we apply or use the information? From a series of language experiences of this nature critical comprehension abilities are acquired and retention, or remembrance, is insured from daily usage of the learnings.

*What is the problem?* The initiation of a new unit of activity or the solving of a problem in the kindergarten or at a higher grade level requires procedures based on a consideration of the goals of instruction. The first step, of course, is a clear cut identification of the problem to be solved or the topic to be studied. A center of interest, such as the care of pets, may require intensive study for a few days and the putting into practice during the school year what was learned. Other topics such as the study of certain aspects of transportation (e.g. trains and buses) or of communication (e.g. how the mail is handled) may require longer periods of time for development. The first step, however, is a careful statement of the problem under consideration.

*What is already known?* Following the identification of the center of interest, the next step is a pointing of teacher and pupil experiences toward the new problem. Through class or group discussions, information on the

new topic is shared and summarized by the class under the guidance of the teacher. Often this can be a listing of interesting statements of facts about the new topic. This pooling of experiences heightens interest, reveals individual pupil preparations for the new topic, exposes background deficiencies, brings to light faulty notions, facilitates pupil relating of language and facts, and, in general, brings to bear on the topic the varied past experiences of the pupils. Both pupils and teacher may challenge the validity of statements, thus making clear the need for accurate information. The chief purpose of this second step is to analyze and summarize "what we know about the new topic or problem."

Even in the most formal spelling program, steps are usually taken to pre-test for the purpose of identifying the specific words that need to be studied. Industrial management is spending increasingly large sums of money to appraise worker readiness for a given task. The authors of manuals for basic reading readiness books and for basal reading books emphasize the need for orientation or preparation for a given developmental activity. Hence, in the development of a unit of activity at any school level, it appears reasonable and essential for the teacher to determine "What we already know about the topic."

*What information is needed?* From the discussion that reveals what is already known about the topic, certain questions naturally arise. After the shared information has been organized, the next step is the statement and organization of the questions and problems on which more information is required. "What do we want to know," or "What do we need to know" then becomes the chief concern of the pupils. Suggestions should come from both pupils and teacher. Not all of the guiding questions will be raised during this preliminary planning period, for other questions

will be brought in as the study of the unit progresses. Selection, evaluation, and organization—highly important language (and reading) skills and abilities—will be brought into play as the questions are organized.

In the traditional type of school, the learning outcomes were kept as a secret by the teacher until the final examination. Teachers in modern schools, however, give direction and purpose to learning activities by guiding pupils in the statement and evaluation of their needs.

Interesting side questions are sometimes introduced in discussions that lead to the setting up of purposes for reading. At one time in the experience of the writer, a group of children was discussing different kinds of domestic animals. This led to a discussion of the names for different kinds of meat. Suddenly it occurred to one pupil that pork comes from hogs and beef from cattle, but what would a butcher call goat meat? While this learning would not rank very high in a scale of values, the whole class became interested in the topic to the extent that they used outside time to run down the answer. (Lest the reader become frustrated at this point, the flesh of a goat is called *chevon*.)

An excellent example of children's questions is found in Miss Maude E. Lilley's report of a unit of work on *Pets*. These six-year-olds raised questions which required considerable investigation (17, p. 107-08):

"Does a turtle ever come all the way out of its shell?

Does a tadpole die when it becomes a frog?

Where does the tail go?

What makes bubbles in the water? (when we put in fresh water)

What makes the saw get warm?

Could a turtle eat a tadpole?

Why does a rabbit always hop?

Will a rabbit and a guinea pig be friends?

Does a dog always chase a rabbit?

Why does the rabbit make a noise with his hind feet when a dog is in the room?

How can a fish get air?

How long does a hen sit on her eggs?

How do the little chicks get out of eggs?

What makes some chicks black, some yellow, etc.?

How can the little chicks breathe under the mother's wings?

Do rabbits like radishes?"

Teachers are dealing with life; their pupils are interested in life. This means that their pupils will ask many questions that should not be brushed aside for a lack of information. The teacher should build pupil confidence and cooperation by referring them to authentic sources of information. In a discussion of "Living Democracy" Vita Stein, a newcomer to the United States, related this story of a classroom experience (20, p. 122):

"I myself was very dependent on the dictionary and encyclopedia. Whenever a question arose, we asked these books for help. So great was my students' confidence in these silent helpers, that when I could not give a satisfactory answer to their question as to 'What God looks like,' a very gentle voice asked: 'Mrs. Stein, why don't you look it up in the dictionary?'"

"What we know" and "What we want to know" may be organized on the blackboard in the same way that a class dictated composition, or experience record, is prepared. For reading readiness groups, this procedure facilitates the association of symbols with meaning and for groups that have some reading ability both language facility and information are developed. As the work on each part of the unit is completed it may be transferred to charts for more or less permanent records.

*Where can we get our information?* After the purposes of the new unit are clearly estab-

lished as "what we want to know" so that the pupils know where they are going, the next step is a discussion of sources of information. This may entail an inventory and appraisal of community and school resources. A trip to the post office or railway station may provide the information on one or more questions. Someone may know Mr. Jones, the owner of an apiary, who might be invited to talk to the class on bees. Several members may offer to bring a collection of colonial pieces to school for an exhibit. Pictures and stereographs showing certain activities may be located. Finally, books and magazines will come in for consideration. For reading readiness groups and primary classes the teacher may do the reading necessary to answer the questions. In short, many aids to learning, including reading, will be canvassed for possibilities.

From a discussion of "where can we get our information," pupils begin to acquire notions about when needs can be satisfied through reading. Other things being equal, reading will be found to be a most satisfactory means of securing information to solve every-day problems and of using recreational time. For certain types of information, they learn to consult a science book, an encyclopedia, a globe, a map, or some other source of information. For sheer enjoyment, they are taught to seek picture books, story books, and the like. This type of reading readiness development is as crucial at the high school level as it is at the pre-reading level, the chief difference being the experience the pupils have had in dealing with reading and other types of learning aids.

As reading abilities are progressively developed, the pupils have increasing need for skills, abilities, and information that permit them to locate pertinent information quickly. They need to be taught how to turn pages, to find pages quickly, to use story or chapter

titles, to use the library effectively, and so on. It should be clear that these learnings are more effectively acquired in functional situations. The teacher doesn't use the calendar to decide that on a given day at ten o'clock the whole class needs some drill on how to locate information. Neither does she worry about the retention of these learnings. Individual and group needs dictate the time and the specific nature of instruction. If a given skill or bit of information is not needed, then it is folly to waste time in giving instruction on the item. The important thing is for the teacher to have the goals of reading instruction sufficiently well in mind to recognize pupil needs and to provide guidance to meet those needs.

*How can we find information?* Following the listing of possible sources of information on the questions dealing with the major problem, the next step in a planned program of preparation—orientation or readiness—involves the locating of pertinent information. Up to this point, the pupils have identified the problem or the area of the activity, shared information pertinent to the activity, clearly stated the problems to be solved or the questions to be answered, and have oriented themselves regarding the learning aids that can be used for their purposes. Among other things at this point, they have real needs to be satisfied regarding the final location of information.

During the pre-reading period, the pupil's reading will be restricted largely to the "reading" of visual aids such as pictures. Since information on some of their questions must be secured from books and other printed materials, the teacher or the librarian must play a major role. If there is a school library, the pupils will have taken out library cards in order to "read" picture books. In any event, the organization of the classroom library or

reading center—however small—will be familiar to them. The need for the acquisition of skills required for locating needed information in books will be developed by observing the teacher as she uses an encyclopedia, a globe, a science handbook, or some other source of information.

Miss Genevieve L. Stone has reported an interesting study of a unit on the animals of one state. The following is a summary which she developed with her thirty-six first-graders (14, p. 535):

"Where We Got Our Information

1. We looked at the encyclopedia in the upstairs library.
2. Caroline brought a book from the state game and fish department called *Mammals of Minnesota*.
3. Gladys brought an animal book from home.
4. Roger brought a book about animals from the public library.
5. We got stories about animals from our primary library.
6. Parents wrote stories about their experiences with animals.
7. Children brought many pictures from magazines and papers.
8. We had stories and pictures in our room library."

*Does the information meet our needs?* After the sources of information have been identified and the means of locating the specific information have been developed, the crucial step of selecting and evaluating the information in terms of the purposes, or questions, must come in for consideration. This, then, becomes a real test of comprehension, especially the ability to relate information. By considered attention to the selecting of appropriate information and to the careful evaluation of that information, superstitions are destroyed, erroneous notions are corrected,

vocabulary is extended, language development is facilitated, and experiences are enriched.

During the pre-reading period, most of these selection and evaluation activities will be carried out in class and group situations. As reading abilities are developed, more and more of this type of activity will be used in group and individual situations. It is important, however, to note that the development of these basic abilities is initiated during the pre-reading period under skilled teacher guidance. The pupils are gradually inducted into the realm of critical interpretation and in that sense they become independent readers, or intelligent consumers of information.

*How shall the information be organized?*

Selection, evaluation, and organization are companion language skills to be acquired by all efficient readers. In a sense, they are the keystone of critical comprehension. Selection, evaluation, and organization are not necessarily formal one-two-three steps in developing language abilities needed for the study of a given unit of work. Information is organized for the purpose of applying facts to the solution of a personal problem or for communication to others interested in the same problem. In addition, well developed organization abilities permit the learner to perceive relationships between facts, and, therefore, contribute to intelligent interpretation. Hence, organization abilities rank high on a scale of values.

Information can be organized in a number of ways, depending upon the needs in the situation and the language abilities of the learners. During the pre-reading period, the information may be organized in well-directed discussions. At this level, the information may be organized on the bulletin board, blackboard (if desired, later transferred to charts), or art easel. At times, the information may be used in constructing a map of the com-

munity on the floor of the room or in completing some other type of construction project. The form of the organization of the information should be determined by the use to which it is to be put.

During the pre-reading period, the information secured from a number of sources, including the printed page, may be organized in the form of an experience record, or class dictated composition. In this type of situation, teacher guidance is given on selecting a title that gives the main idea of the summary and on organizing paragraphs and sequence of sentences in each paragraph. Usually, however, such summaries at this age level are brief, containing only a few selected statements about the main topic. Organization abilities are developed through class dictated records in the kindergarten and primary grades.

Arts and crafts projects may be used to summarize information. A class planned frieze or map, an orange box movie strip, the construction of a class grocery store or airplane—these and other types of activities require the abilities to organize and apply information. In some instances, resourceful teachers have taken pictures of the stages in the development of a unit of work and have combined them with the art products of the pupils in the preparation of an interesting booklet for the reading center. This type of combined art and language project often leads to the organization of a table of contents to show what is in the booklet.

Listing, or one-point outlines, of answers to questions, is another serviceable way to organize information with beginners. Relationships among ideas can be established in the pupils' minds by a careful consideration of the sequence of the statements. These statements should be pupil dictated, evaluated, and organized with teacher guidance.

Traditional techniques of organization include outlining, summarizing, and precis writing. One and two point outlines for relating main ideas and supporting details are often needed in the primary grades. Summaries of one paragraph or more are used, beginning with the pre-reading period. Precis writing, of course, is used in high school and college. While these are excellent means of organizing facts, they are highly abstract.

True-false tests and other artificial means of checking comprehension lose much of their significance when adequate attention is given to the organization of information during the development of a unit of activity. Furthermore, outlining and summarizing are not the only means of organizing information. Proportion in a pupil's art project, the relating of information in a graph or pie chart, modified pupil behavior as a result of having secured information on how colds and infectious diseases are spread—these and similar manifestations of evaluation and organization usually provide ample evidence of comprehension. To the degree that these abilities are continuously developed and appraised in functional situations there are fewer reasons for the use of artificial test devices.

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# The Prevention of Poor Reading

DAVID KOPEL<sup>1</sup>

The great science of human welfare has progressed in many instances from the study of causes of disorders and their amelioration to the development of preventive or prophylactic measures. This has been true especially in one important division of the science: medicine. In another division, education, the realization is spreading too that the prevention of maladjustments such as poor reading is far more rewarding than remediation.

Poor reading is found at every school level. In the middle- and upper-elementary grades, as well as in the high school and college, it can be prevented by means of continuous guidance, or developmental programs of instruction. Poor reading is most prevalent, however, in the first grade.<sup>2</sup> It is here that preventive measures are most urgently needed.

That most reading casualties, which apparently have their inception in the first grade, can be averted with ease and economy has been demonstrated repeatedly by various studies of the elements determining readiness for and success in beginning reading.<sup>3</sup> Im-

pressed by this research, many schools have initiated "reading-readiness" programs—and have obtained a striking reduction in the toll of "reading failures." In one large city, for example, a forty-five per cent decrease took place, as the failing rate dropped from 20 per cent to 11 per cent (29).

## *Importance of Reading-Readiness*

Preventive measures then are predominantly reading-readiness measures. Indeed it is as reprehensible today for a teacher or school administrator to ignore reading-readiness policies in combating the blight of reading disability as it would be for a public health official to do without antitoxin in fighting smallpox. But the analogy is not complete. Whereas the doctor has a standard practice, the educator must select from a host of preventive recommendations which vary widely in their adequacy and effectiveness. Recent research, reported and interpreted below, provides help in understanding, and discriminating between, practices of dubious value and methods of genuine merit.

Repeated investigations have established a close relationship between mental age and success in beginning reading. A mental age of approximately six years six months is known to be essential for most children if they are to profit from the *typical* program of reading instruction. However, the "necessary" minimum will range perhaps a year below and above this level, depending upon such variables as the nature of the program, children's experience, and the criteria of success.

Reading-readiness tests have been shown to add little to the accuracy of predictions of

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<sup>2</sup>This statement is true only in the sense that it is confirmed by the statistics of many school surveys, and appears in practically every professional book on reading. The writer has pointed out elsewhere that "poor readers" in the primary grades are simply immature children who become academic and emotional casualties only as a result of being frustrated and confused by "reading" tasks for which they are unready. Nevertheless the problems of these children are real and merit very serious consideration because of the hazards they represent to wholesome personality development and also because the faulty habits and fearful, antagonistic attitudes toward reading which are engendered at this time persevere to preclude the attainment at maturity of potential levels of reading ability.

<sup>3</sup>For comprehensive summaries of research see Harrison (11) and Witty and Kopel (28).

readiness for individual children based on their intelligence test scores (23). Indeed the unreliability of both measures has led several workers to advocate that additional indices of readiness be obtained before planning instruction or grouping children in "reading," "pre-reading," "non-reading," "B1," or other classes. Useful indicators of readiness are a) evidence of pre-school reading activities (15, 26), b) a well-developed, healthy body (20), c) emotional stability (11), d) a wide background of experience (12, 21), e) fluent speech (1), and f) a demonstrated interest in books. These developmental data must be secured by the teacher for all the children in her group if she is to provide the informed, individualized guidance that helps assure maximum development not only in reading but also in every other area of growth.

#### *Reading Readiness Programs*

Most studies recently have been descriptions of reading readiness programs. The more important of these accounts will be reviewed in the remainder of this article, which will call attention to salient characteristics and basic assumptions of these new curricula.

Reports by Fallon (7) and by Johnson (13) testified to the practicality and value in a very large school system (Chicago) of giving immature first-graders a semester of "preparatory" experiences instead of reading instruction. Boney and Lynch (1) also provided evidence of the value of postponing reading instruction for slow "growers" or learners.

Ring (22) described the results of a readiness program consisting of measures to improve physical health and to foster emotional and intellectual development without reading instruction. She found that an experimental group progressed faster after reading was begun than did two other "regular reading" groups. By the end of the second and third years in school the experimental group

equalled the control groups although the former had received five months less instruction than the latter.

#### *Delaying Systematic Instruction*

A very important investigation bearing on this topic was conducted for seven years by Morphett and Washburne (18). They delayed systematic reading instruction for an experimental group until it was in the middle of the second grade. Test scores of these children were inferior during their first three years in school, but thereafter they improved to equal and then to surpass the controls. Thus, in the seventh grade, their average Stanford reading grade of 10.1 was a whole grade above that of the controls; their scores in other subjects, and their ratings on spontaneity, were similarly superior to those earned by the controls. The investigators concluded that the substitution of a wide variety of educational experiences "whets children's appetites for learning and results in increased progress throughout the child's elementary school life."

#### *Using the Activity Program*

Gates and Pritchard (9) demonstrated the effectiveness of an activity program for slow-learning children (with I.Q.'s between 70 and 90). Reading and other subjects were taught as they were needed in promoting the major enterprises of the group. This instruction was carefully planned, and nicely adjusted to individual differences in ability and interest. Basal readers and workbooks were used moderately. However, far less time was devoted to reading instruction than in a typical control school. Periodic tests over a period of years revealed growth in reading ability that was commensurate with Stanford-Binet mental age. One group, upon graduation, were "seventh grade readers in vocabulary and comprehension" and sixth grade in speed. Comparisons with the control children favored the "guinea pigs" who were "somewhat superior" in reading ability and "strikingly

superior" in amount of independent reading. In addition these children later in the secondary school gave evidence that, "they had put reading and other forms of learning to especially good use . . . in a more realistic choice of a future educational program and vocational career," and had achieved, generally, "a more wholesome adjustment to life."

In a chapter on reading of a recent book evaluating modern education (17), Wrightstone reviews several other studies of reading progress in activity curricula wherein extensive reading instruction has been usually postponed for a semester or more and subordinated to the business of carrying on important group projects. He shows that children in such programs make slower progress at first, but they usually achieve or surpass the ordinary standards by the end of the second or third year in school. In later grades they maintain a slight superiority in those aspects of reading ability measured by standardized tests. They excel, significantly enough, in the ability to read critically and purposefully, and in the tendency to read widely. The validity of these results is now firmly established by their consistent production over a period of many years, in a diversity of locations, under a variety of public and private school conditions, with children of practically every ability level.

The foregoing investigations reflect definite trends to delay reading instruction for most children in the first grade, and to lessen the pressure on all children in the early grades to attain set standards of reading achievement. Recommendations conflicting with these trends appeared, however, in a few studies. Thus Dice (5) claimed slightly better results in reading skills and free reading from a "direct approach" (immediate introduction to the hearing, discussion, and reading of stories in their entirety) than from a "preparatory approach" (a two-month period of reading

readiness activities followed by word drills and other reading instruction). However, high and average ability groups did equally well (or poorly) under both methods. Only the low ability groups achieved higher scores as a rule under the "direct approach." Approximately a third of the scores on various tests at the end of the year—under both methods—were so low<sup>4</sup> that they doubtless represent a great deal of failure and frustration for the children who obtained them. This observation does not appear in the study, for the investigator's attention was centered upon average scores rather than upon the children, especially in the lower part of the distribution, who provided the data. Instead of demonstrating the "superiority" of one method over another, this study in effect condemns both programs as unhygienic and ineffective for many children.

Several other investigations give similar proof—if proof is wanted—that children of low as well as normal and high intelligence can be taught some reading skills in the first grade by any one of many methods. Roslow (24), assuming explicitly that reading must be taught in Grade I, reported considerable success in adapting instruction for children with mental ages below six and below the average in I.Q. and in reading readiness. (Whether the reading gains of these children were permanent was not disclosed.) Keister (14) found that it is possible "for children who enter Grade I before they reach the age of six to make normal progress in reading during the first year." These gains, however, tended to disappear during the summer months and the loss was not made up in succeeding years.

Gates and Russell (10) and Steinbach

<sup>4</sup>Thus at the end of the experiment 58 of 171 children in the experimental group, and a similar proportion of the controls, obtained scores of less than zero on a special "test designed to measure the ability of the two groups to read independently and to attack new materials successfully." (5, pp. 31, 49.)

(25) also have shown that some first-grade children with mental ages of less than six years six months can learn to read when skillful individualized instruction is provided. Similarly, by means of continuous teaching adjustments, Dunklin (6) succeeded in keeping most of his "potential failures" from failing in a formal reading program (employing a basic text, workbooks, etc.) Nevertheless, Dunklin concluded that, "The first grade child's welfare should be the deciding factor in planning his program. Under some circumstances, a program which enables him to learn to read will be advisable. Under others, one of the many types of non-reading programs will best serve his needs."

The studies mentioned above which show the possibility of teaching reading formally to five- and six-year-olds cast serious doubt, however, on the wisdom of so doing. None of these studies proves that an early start insures a high degree of reading competence in later years. None provides any evidence that the heavy investment of time and effort by teachers and children yields any dividends beyond an immediate attainment of limited performance standards which are functionally quite meaningless in the child's life.

The evidence predominantly favors the view that postponement of formal instruction in reading for one or more semesters after entrance to school is beneficial for many children; whereas forcing children to read in the first grade without respect for individual differences in ability and need is definitely deleterious and, occasionally, traumatic. The investment of first-grade time in *experience* yields rich benefits in meanings which may later be associated economically and purposefully with abstract symbols.

Some of the proponents of reading instruction in the first grade now urge the simultaneous provision of meaningful experience. This proposal is not realistic, however,

in view of the fact that a full third of the school day is devoted to reading activities by the typical first-grade teacher who provides formal reading instruction. There simply is not time for teaching reading formally *and* for providing a rich program of experience.

### *Fallacies Regarding Readiness*

It is important to note certain fallacies in the concept of reading readiness held by many persons (16). Wilson and Sartorius (27) point out that these errors usually stem from the incorrect notion that the reading process is found only in the interpretation of "connected discourse from books, charts, and perhaps the blackboard or prepared paper materials. All preceding stages or steps," their analysis continues, "are considered [incorrectly] to be developing 'readiness' for reading. That is, during the period before entering grade one children develop mental and other abilities and interests which get them 'ready' to learn to read. The implication is that these 'reading readiness' stages are fundamentally different from the steps in learning to read. A sounder and more realistic view is that these two widely separated periods of development are actually stages in the same basic process of learning to read." These investigators avoid the use of the misleading phrase, "reading readiness," by speaking instead of "early progress in reading."

The validity of this view becomes apparent as one lists the activities involving printed or written materials in which many children engage long before they enter school. They handle books, turn pages, look at pictures, play with alphabet blocks, recognize words and letters, learn to associate a favorite story with a given book, etc., etc. Some of these activities may occur as early as the age of two. Let there be no mistake: these are rudimentary *reading* activities. A child so engaged is reading, learning to read, and preparing to read on more advanced levels simultaneously.

When these children arrive in the first grade—or the kindergarten—the schools should ascertain the amount and quality of their reading experience,—and build on that foundation. Continuity between the child's pre-school life and his early school experiences is a prerequisite for a wholesome, educative primary-grade curriculum (8, 15, 27).

#### *Reading No Ultimate End*

Studies of "reading readiness" have served to emphasize the indispensability of a rich background of experience before children can profit from intensive application to books. The provision of readiness or preparatory programs for immature children is beneficial insofar as they provide worthy, educative experiences and foster balanced growth of the whole child.

Many readiness programs, however, are narrowly conceived with the simple "shoe-horn" objective of easing the child, after a time, into an inflexible, and ill-fitting reading curriculum. Such readiness programs consist largely of exercises which parallel the contents of readiness tests and simulate some of the skills (mainly perceptual) involved in elementary reading. Practice on these tests enables the child finally to obtain a satisfactory score on the readiness test, and (largely because he has lived several additional months) to engage successfully then in the typical reading program. This type of readiness program has the virtue of saving pupils from the worse evil of immediate subjection to incomprehensible and stultifying reading tasks. Nevertheless, it perverts and distorts the implications of research data about reading and child development. Insofar as it makes of reading skill an ultimate end in education rather than a valuable instrument for the attainment of worthy personal and social goals, it is still another ironic manifestation of what Dewey (4) forty-five years ago recognized as the "primary education fetish."

The prevention of poor reading depends then upon *subordinating* reading instruction and "reading readiness" activities to a program of living—of exploration, cooperation, and expression—in a curriculum organized around "significant group enterprises" (8). In such a school, no pressure is exerted upon children to read; they aren't coaxed and cajoled to do practice exercises, to read primarily for the sake of learning to read. They aren't given marks and grades. They aren't required to drone the sickly repetitive, emasculated fare of most pre-primers and other "basic" texts. They aren't segregated invidiously into "reading" and "readiness" groups. They aren't threatened with failure for not achieving the arbitrary standards set by over-zealous and misguided adults.

#### *Reading in the Activity School*

Reading is not shunned nor its value minimized in an activity school. On the contrary, it prizes reading so much that it is ready to give up any unsound or dubious practice, no matter how venerable, that stands in the way of developing able and habitual users of print (3, 19). The experience program calls for reading at every level. Indeed, the activity school provides a reading environment even in the kindergarten for all children, irrespective of their degree of "readiness." Its curriculum calls for books in every primary-grade classroom—many of them, with gay covers, colorful illustrations, and large type. It calls for the use of these books by the children and the teacher. The teacher reads from them for their entertainment value, at the same time acquainting the children with important characteristics of reading materials and with devices for deriving meaning from print. Children are encouraged at some time in the day to browse among the books and to ask questions about them. The teacher also demonstrates the use of books

for securing information—when it is needed to answer children's questions. The children have and use many other opportunities to read: name plates, dates, directions, schedules, memoranda, brief compositions dictated to the teacher, etc.

This description of an activity or experience school and its reading procedures is far from complete. Helpful, detailed blueprints are available in publications by Gans (8), Gates and Pritchard (9), the California Curriculum Commission (2), de Lima (3) and others. When such curricula with their inherent measures for preventing poor reading prevail in the primary grades of America, the problem of poor reading will largely disappear.

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# The Uses and Abuses of Oral Reading

MILTON J. COHLER<sup>1</sup>

Any broad program of reading instruction includes objectives requiring the use of both oral and silent reading techniques. Although no specific relationship can be assigned to respective amounts of time that should be devoted to each type of reading, relative social utility demands that a much greater amount of time be devoted to silent than to oral reading, at least after the initial stages of learning to associate the new visual symbol with the already familiar oral one. When this rule-of-thumb for the division of time is consistently violated, it is either because the objectives of reading instruction are too limited or that there is no adequate realization that method has implicit in it certain outcomes which are not respecters of wishes, however earnest they may be. Even when the teacher has no ostensible objectives, the kind of method she uses determines the outcomes just as surely as if they were the results of planning. Hence, if a teacher wishes to avoid undesirable results it is essential that she plan carefully and use methods conducive to the achievement of aims in keeping with her educational philosophy.

The light of such planning would cast a deep shadow upon the method which permits forty books to be open at the same place with one pupil calling out the printed words, while the other children spend their time looking at the same page in deference to their teacher and their performing classmate. A planner who relates methods to aims would realize that such an exercise may be conducive to learning forbearance under trying circumstances, but that it is neither closely related

to learning to read nor to appreciate the literary quality of the page undergoing treatment.

Even if the passage under discussion had been studied previously by silent techniques for thought or literary appreciation, it should not necessarily be read orally as a routine review. A teacher who is mindful of her educational purposes need not resort to the giving of oral reading exercises having ill-defined aims, since there are many valid objectives to be served by oral reading techniques. This is not to say that one may indulge in almost any kind of oral reading and claim the achievement of one of these valid objectives. Oral reading, like silent reading, is not a general method, but a group of techniques requiring variation in specific procedure to apply to the specific materials in use and the aims to be achieved.

## *Valid Aims of Oral Reading*

For example, one valid aim of oral reading is the cultivation of literary appreciation through hearing a selection read. The reading for this purpose must be expertly done, after careful preparation, by a person who has an adequate appreciation of the selection. To have the reading done haltingly or with poor expression would destroy its value to the audience as a literary appreciation lesson and its value to the reader as an exercise in speech training. In this type of lesson only the reader should have an open copy of the selection. An exception could be made when a very difficult language form is being read, requiring both the visual and auditory stimuli for understanding. Poetry and drama freighted with meaning are examples of lan-

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guage forms which may require the audience to look on at their books. This practice should be limited, however, to passages where the assimilation of thought is likely to be no more rapid than its oral expression by the reader. Thus the audience would neither run on ahead in silent reading nor be slowed down by the reader. The latter is to be avoided especially, since it inhibits the acquisition of adequate rate in silent reading.

When a given piece of information must be imparted to the whole class and only one copy of the publication containing the information is available, oral reading is the logical medium. This is a pure type of audience situation, and unless the selection is well within the reading threshold of the reader, the oral rendering should be carefully prepared. This kind of audience situation occurs when a pupil is given a report to the class and must read some authority as part of his report. The reading should be prepared just as carefully as the rest of the report.

When a passage in a book is misunderstood, or not comprehended at all, oral reading is a useful technique. The teacher, or a pupil who understands, reads aloud and explains while the rest look on at their books. The purposes which can be served by one pupil reading while the rest look on at their books are numerous enough to provide ample opportunity for the correct use of this technique. In addition to those mentioned above, reading to the class to prove an assertion or to illustrate a point made in an oral discussion can employ this technique in a natural situation. Other examples include reading to render an interpretation, reading to place a word or phrase being studied in its context, and reading as response to a question.

Children who are retarded in reading because of inadequacies in the mechanics have additional valid uses for oral reading with all the books open. When they are in a small

group this procedure can be used to provide help in word recognition, meaningful phrasing, and proper inflections for various punctuation marks.

### *Oral Reading for Diagnosis*

Although all classroom oral reading situations are, in a sense, tests of achievement, most of them are not diagnostic in character. For diagnostic testing it is well to have the pupil read to the teacher as the sole audience. If the teacher is *en rapport* with the pupil this situation omits the complicating factor of ability to perform before a large audience. It is thus possible to make the reading purely a test of reading and speech. The teacher will want to use this technique to discover types of errors made by the pupil, to find the reading peculiarities of her pupils, and to appraise pupil habits in reading mechanics. Speech habits can be carefully observed in such a test situation.

In addition to its teaching and testing functions oral reading has important uses for motivation. A pupil can be helped to develop confidence in his ability to read orally—and silently—by having a sympathetic teacher or pupil act as a private audience. Later, the pupil may be permitted to read to the whole class in an audience situation as a reward for commendable progress. The teacher should be assured beforehand, however, that the pupil has mastered the reading of the selection, thus avoiding the pitfall of having the anticipated reward become another frustrating experience.

The caution against employing practices which are likely to induce frustration and poor habits may not be taken lightly by a teacher; for the teaching job involves an almost constant steering between Scylla and Charybdis. Slight variations in technique may easily produce undesired concomitant learnings which may outweigh the value of achieving the major objectives. A realization of this constant problem involved in the teaching and

learning act prompts the writer to discuss below undesirable practices which should be avoided.

The oral reading of content material by one pupil while the rest look on at their books, followed by a quiz at the end of each passage, is the form that most school lessons take in the caricatures of school which appear in story and on the stage. Writers and dramatists utilize this type of lesson because it lends itself easily to ridicule, on account of the many harmful habits and attitudes it cultivates. It is hardly a favorable oral reading procedure, it does not provide a situation where thoughtful analysis is likely, and the pupils who follow the reading silently cultivate slow, laborious methods of silent reading.

The oral testing of a pupil who is not an expert reader, utilizing the entire class as an audience is a procedure only less undesirable than the preceding one. Such a test is more likely to be one of poise and ability to appear before an audience, to say nothing of the uneconomical use of the time of all the rest of the class. Even though the small group and individual methods of utilizing oral reading for testing functions are essential, the exclusive reliance upon such oral testing situations is not sound practice. Oral testing must be supplemented by standard and informal silent reading tests as well as the production of concrete work which is evidence of having read certain material correctly.

The idea that one cannot be sure that a lesson has been read correctly until it has been rendered orally has impelled some teachers to review all silent reading lessons orally, irrespective of any other purpose to be served by this routine. At best, this is wasteful; and it may even lead to a loss of interest and the inculcation of the idea that silent reading need not be done carefully.

#### *The Meaning of "To Read"*

It is the writer's belief that under reliance

upon oral reading will continue as long as a common basic misconception of the reading act is current. This conception arises from the connotation of the imperative mood of the verb *to read*. It is exemplified by the semantic implication of the command, "John, read the next page." To most people this means to read the page aloud. If a teacher wanted John only to secure the thought she would be likely to say, "John, read the next page to yourself." Teachers are too disposed to think of silent reading as a special case of reading, while they think of oral rendering as the normal meaning of the verb *to read*. The logic of relative social utility demands exactly the opposite semantic emphasis. Perhaps it would help if teachers acquired the habit of saying, "Read" when they want the selection read silently, and "Give a reading," or "Read orally," when they want it read aloud.

A misconception of the psychology of learning which is probably even more basic than the semantic error mentioned is the practice of thinking of oral and silent reading instruction as two different "subjects." They are, rather, two different teaching procedures having the purposes of securing and interpreting thought through the medium of the printed page. Whether the oral or silent procedure is used at a given juncture should be determined by the specific purpose at hand. There are instances when oral procedures are necessary to promote silent understanding and interpretation, and numerous instances when silent preparation is essential to oral rendering.

In the last analysis, the problem is how to apply to the reading situation the general principle that every aim has implicit in it certain types of methods, and that once we select a method it determines for us, willy-nilly, the aims which can be achieved. Only by an understanding of valid reading aims can we proceed to devise and apply methods which will serve those aims.

# The Children's Opinion of Comic Books

MARGARET F. FROST<sup>1</sup>

"But what do the children think?", one member of the class asked.

Comic Books was the day's topic for the Curriculum class at Humboldt State College in their study of children's reading. The opinions of many groups were expressed in the reference material from the library: opinions of publishers, teachers, parents, and clubs. Apparently the grown people had their minds firmly made up about the influence of Comic Books on the children's play, the effect on their reading habits, and the role they played in character formation.

The members of the panel would be the student teachers in the College Elementary School the next semester, and to them it was the children's opinions that mattered. General conjectures were interesting, but since they were working with a specific group, why not discover from it what the youngsters thought about comic books? After all, they were American school children, living in a small town, coming from homes with a great variety of backgrounds, and representing at least a half dozen nationalities. Their reading habits should form a typical pattern.

The opening question thus led to a survey in which members of the class questioned children from the third to the eighth grades to discover what they thought about Comic Books. High school students of the same neighborhood contributed their opinions about the effects of reading comic literature.

The following summary is the composite opinion from all the answers:

Practically all children read Comic Books. One-third of the new copies are bought by parents who either admit that they get them for themselves or, pretending that they buy them for the children, read them anyway. Boys who earn their own money buy copies

because they think it is a good investment for a dime. Several boys who have allowances buy two or three at a time. One boy buys six or eight a week. Girls buy very few; they borrow them from the boys. One copy passes from child to child and is read many times before it is discarded.

Comics are traded for junk, for things to eat, for other comics, or for different magazines. Junk is defined as any gadget which may prove useful to a little boy. The girls raid the pantry for food to exchange for the books. Comics in good condition are traded one-for-one regardless of how old they are. Worn copies are traded in bundles and are worth very little. Some copies are traded at the local second-hand store, but most swaps are with neighbor children.

In the trading for magazines other than Comics, separate bargains are negotiated on each deal. One boy said that one *Popular Mechanics* is worth four Comics; another said six. *Popular Science*, *Popular Aviation*, and *Boy's Life* are favorite traders and are each worth several Comics.

Some parents object to their children's reading Comics; some do not. Many parents buy them for their children, but never buy them any other magazines or books. About a third of the parents do not mind if the children read Comics, but see that their child has other reading material also. Some of the parents whose protest is loudest do not provide their child with any other literature.

The fact that parents object has practically no influence in keeping a child from reading Comics. If a child cannot read them openly, he gets them from other children or buys them himself and sneaks them into his room or keeps them in his own or his friend's garage.

The children did not know of a single child who had been influenced to do anything wrong because of ideas he got from a Comic Book.

<sup>1</sup>A Student-Teacher in Humboldt State College, Arcata, Cal.

Influenced by their reading, the younger boys play G-Men, Red Ryder, or the Hawkman, and they engage in flights to Mars and gigantic F. B. I. raids. They agree that even though at times they resort to violent means in their play, they do so only that virtue may finally triumph.

On the whole, children do not read Comics to dramatize them or emulate their heroes; they read them for entertainment.

In choosing favorite comics, children seek two things: they want them thrilling and they want them funny. These two qualities can be combined or can appear alone. They definitely do not want love stories.

### *The Children's Comments*

These are the children's comments on the series of Comics sponsored by *Parent's Magazine*. The series includes *True Comics*, *Real Heroes*, *True Picture Magazine*, and *Calling All Girls*:

"The idea of having them true is O. K., but the heroes are too perfect."

"Anyone can see that some well-meaning grown folks are trying to feed the kids what is good for them."

"No one could believe that heroes are so sickly sweet; they aren't real."

"I'll admit, they are getting better."

"They are not as well drawn as the Super-Man series."

The series of Comics about the Army, the Navy, and Aviation are not very popular. The Commando series is gaining in popularity. The children say:

"If we are going to read about the Army, aviators, or mechanics, we want things to be very accurate. The informaton does not have to be mixed up with stories."

Of the Comic Books given free at the Service Stations the children comment:

"Not much."

"Not good drawing."

"Sure, we take anything that is free, but they are not even good traders."

Of *Magic Comics* the children say:

"We like this because it has variety."

"This is good when you want to read short things."

"Entertaining."

The children's comment on *Star Spangled Comics* is:

"This is usually fairly good."

"We like stories about airplanes and battle-ships if the story is not slowed up to tell too much about mechanics. We would rather have the information about mechanics given by itself."

The largest group of Comics are the thrillers which are patterned after the greatest thriller of them all—*Super-Man*. Of *Super-Man* the children say:

"This is the best."

"We usually do not like girls in stories, but we do not mind Lois Lane because she always tries to help out even if she does mix things up a lot of times."

The *All-Star Comics* are the most popular related series. They include the Members of the Justice Society of America who "work untiringly to see that right and justice prevail." The members include Flash, The Spectre, Dr. Fate, The Green Lantern, The Hawkman, The Sandman, The Atom, The Hourman, and Johnny Thunder. Of all these children say: "These are the real thrillers."

"Sure, they are impossible, but when you are reading for fun, you like them exciting."

"They are easy to read."

"These are good fun."

There are really only a few of the Comic Books which definitely belong to the funny group.

Of *Krazy Comics* the children say:

"This is one of the few funny ones."

"There are not many really corny books like this and it has some good laughs."

The children's comment on *Merry Melodies* and *Looney Tunes* is, "Little children think this is swell, but after you get big enough to read the others you don't think so much of it."

Most of the children agree that any of the Comics put out by Walt Disney studios are tops. They say:

"If Walt Disney could draw all the funny ones we wouldn't ask for anything better."

"We wish there were more like these."

"These are the only ones which have funny jokes to remember and tell."

(Continued on page 341)

# "And She Did"

LOU LABRANT<sup>1</sup>

You are all familiar with the story of the little red hen, who, when she wanted bread, planted the wheat, tended it, harvested it, took it to mill, and finally baked and ate the bread. Something of her spirit moved a group of people interested in children's reading some years ago. They recalled their own childhood delight in certain story magazines no longer existent or sadly changed; they deplored the lack of such periodicals for young children; and then they decided to make such a magazine. They are now at the stage of enjoying the result. It is the purpose of this little paper to tell of their venture since, unlike the red hen's bread, their product flourishes with the larger number to share in the eating.

Initiation of a magazine is less simple than it may sound. The basic idea is easily seen: to gather good stories and print them in periodical form. But before this can be done writers have to be interested, and have some assurance that their stories will be printed. There must be a form for the magazine—a chosen size, type, shape, illustration plans—and a probable audience. These things call for an editor, an office, a group of backers, a printer, and these mean money. Frequently teachers have good ideas but lack funds. Occasionally foundations are discovered to supply money; usually this is not true.

So it happened that in 1935 when these persons (librarians, teachers of children, supervisors, college teachers, and editors) made their plans, they had to guarantee with their own money that the magazine would be able to pay an editor, to assure a printer's contract, and to keep the organization going until subscriptions would be sufficient to carry the

load. This meant that for several years, while the magazine was coming to be known, they would have to keep it going from their private contributions. Thus *Story Parade*, a magazine for children, was launched on a less than non-profit basis.

*Story Parade* is a monthly magazine completely devoted to the presentation of well-written material for youngsters. Only stories of good literary quality are used, and illustrations are by the foremost illustrators of children's books. Generous use of color and a careful choice of type and paper not only encourage reading but help to develop appreciation of good format and art.

In selecting copy the editors have consistently considered interest value, and truth and artistic merit in the stories as chief criteria. The magazine has never been designed as an aid to unit studies, nor has it undertaken to forward any social or political thesis. It is true that stories which present honestly the lives of children in other times and countries, and which show human values in varied social and economic settings promote important understandings and good will. Extensive reading of good literature at any age level will do the same to the open-minded reader. But special outcomes other than enjoyment of good reading have been left to take care of themselves.

*Story Parade* is proving valuable in classrooms because it encourages children to read material easily associated with leisure and home reading. They feel possessive about a magazine which is for them alone. Many teachers have found parents eager to subscribe and most grateful for having the suggestion made to them. The subscription

<sup>1</sup>Professor of English education at New York University.

makes an ideal Christmas or birthday gift, and both home and school gain from the child's pleasure.

The high quality of the stories has resulted in a number of books of reprints. The first, *Story Parade Blue Book* (Winston), initiated a series of similar annuals. The magazine shares royalties with authors and thus secures funds for enriching future numbers. *Story Parade Adventure Books* and *Story Parade Picture Books*, at very low prices, have also served well, and at least two have won the *Herald Tribune* award. Another interesting venture has been a radio story hour (CBS), scheduled in school time and presented by a skilled child specialist.

Sponsors of *Story Parade* organized The Association for the Arts of Childhood, a group which has gradually expanded to include teachers from all over the United States. Because, however, the organization is informal and has as sole purpose promotion of the publications, few teachers are aware of it and many do not know the magazine and its book

friends are the output of this professional and non-profit association. The organization naturally holds no meetings, has no professional year-books or reports, makes no requests for speakers. It asks merely that members extend information about the publications, and offer criticism of them. The undertaking is one in which readers of *The Elementary English Review* would naturally be interested. Any teacher may become a subscriber, an associate member, or a sponsoring member of the A. A. C. The subscription for nine issues (school year) is \$1.50; for twelve, \$2.00. A teacher or school subscribing secures also *The Supplement*, a monthly article written by an outstanding teacher or editor and suggesting classroom uses related to the year's issues.

Teachers who are interested in securing information about *Story Parade*, the radio program, or other publications of the Association, or in having printed information and subscription blanks to distribute to parents should write to: *Story Parade*, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

## RECENT EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING READING:

(Continued from page 305)

As each child finds a story or poem, he writes the title, the page number, the name of the book, and his own name on a strip of red paper. This is then placed in the book as a marker and the book put in a special place designated as the Christmas table or the Christmas shelf. As new material is found, it is added, and special attention is called to these new additions each day.

All of our pleasure reading is done informally from this collection of Christmas

material, each child reading as he chooses and putting the book back for another to read. Bits of spare time gained by rapid and correct work on other assignments may be used for this Christmas reading. Once each week we have what we call a question-box at which time the children (and the teacher) take turns asking leading questions about the stories. In answering these questions, the correct title of the story in which it is found must also be given.

# The Educational Scene

Among the many scores of children's books listed, mentioned, or reviewed in the October *Review*, we have discovered two which were supplied with erroneous publication facts. *Chopin*, by Antoni Gronowicz, published by Thomas Nelson, a full-length biography, was confused with a somewhat earlier publication, *Frederic Chopin*, by Andre Maurois, published by Harper and Brothers. A review of the former book will appear in a succeeding issue. *You Can't Pet A Possum*, a recommended book about Negro children, published by Morrow, was attributed to another publisher. Our apologies to all concerned.

The H. W. Wilson Company (New York) has published a useful pamphlet entitled *Short Cuts to Information*, by Zaidee Brown. Sub-titled *Time Savers for Teachers, Librarians, and All Who Must Find the Answers*, the booklet lists sources of information and guidance for educators on all subjects related to teaching. It is now in its fifth edition.

Educational material on China, including pamphlets, maps, posters, pictures, bibliographies, data on Chinese films, and records of Chinese songs and music, is available from United China Relief, 1790 Broadway, New York City. Much of it is free to teachers.

An interesting study of language change and of new words in current use was made by the class of Mary W. Todd, of the Emma Willard School, of Troy, N. Y. The report of the study, which includes a list of the words assembled, is found in the October, 1943, issue of *Word Study*, available free to teachers from G. and C. Merriam Company, Springfield 2, Mass.

Two pamphlets by Dr. Emmett A. Betts, *Visual Readiness for Reading* (50c), and *Factors in Readiness for Reading* (50c), may be secured from the Reading Clinic, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania.

The American Library Association *Bulletin* reports that the boys and girls of the

Pacific Northwest voted Eric Knight's *Lassie-Come-Home* the most popular recent book. It received the Young Reader's Choice Award from the Children's and School Librarian's sections of the Pacific Northwest Library Association.

The *Edpress News Letter* quotes James Marshall, of the New York Board of Education, to the effect that, in the light of contemporary thinking, the following lines from Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verse* are "smug":

Little Indians, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Esquimo,  
Little Turk or Japanee,  
O don't you wish that you were me?

\* \* \* \*

Such a life is very fine  
But it's not so nice as mine.

\* \* \* \* \*

You have curious things to eat,  
I am fed on proper meat;  
You must dwell beyond the foam,  
But I am safe and live at home.

The Squander Bug is a new character on the national scene. His antics aren't comedy—they spell catastrophe for our war effort. It is particularly easy for this Axis agent to get into wallets and pocketbooks around Christmas time, when boys and girls want to spend money for gifts. There is one way to fight this fifth-column pest—to buy Bonds and Stamps, the present with a future.

To encourage the giving of War Bonds and Stamps at Christmas time, a Christmas play has been prepared for elementary and junior high students. *The Squander Bug's Christmas Carol*, by Aileen L. Fisher, presents a whole brigade of Squander Bugs gleeful over the growing list of nonessentials on the shopping list of twelve-year-old Dave. To the tune of "The Little Brown Jug" and "He's a Jolly Good Fellow," they sing and cavort across the room while Dave learns an important lesson of wartime thrift. Copies of this 20-minute play are available, one to a teacher, from your State War Finance Office or the

Education Section, War Finance Division,  
Washington 25, D. C.

Education Section  
War Finance Division  
U. S. Treasury

In order that the boys and girls of England may get better acquainted with their compatriots across the sea, creating an even closer bond of understanding, 61 Schools-at-War scrapbooks, made by the school children of America, are now ready for embarkation. They were submitted to the War Finance Division of the Treasury Department and are being shipped at the request of the British Division of the Office of War Information.

Upon arrival overseas, these graphic portrayals of what American boys and girls are doing in wartime will be displayed first at the U. S. Information Library of the American Embassy in London. From there they will be sent on a "Good-Will Tour" throughout the country—to be studied by British educational groups, including not only individual schools but teachers associations.

The American-Russian Institute, 101 Post Street, San Francisco, has published an attractive illustrated booklet entitled, *Soviet Culture in Wartime*. The section on Child Care, Education Notes, and Children's Workshops in Moscow tell of amazing achievement in education in the midst of a desperate struggle against the invader. Of interest also is the note that of the 30,000 books published during the war by Soviet publishing houses, 2,000 were written by Red army commanders and men.

Among recent reports of the Inter-American Education Demonstration Centers of the U. S. Office of Education are (1) a report of a curriculum unit, "Neighbors in South America," by Gladys Kotter, carried out by a sixth grade class in the school of Brigham Young University, (2) a description of another unit, "Life and Problems in Other American Republics," by Mildred White, of the College Elementary School, Ellensburg, Washington (also with a sixth grade), and (3) a report of the Demonstration Center Project from January to June, 1943.

The Association for Childhood Education published a *Bibliography of Books for Young Children*, which has been revised from year to year. In order to save paper, the former edition has been retained, but a 1942-3 supplement is available. Copies of the list may be obtained for \$0.50 from the organization's headquarters at 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

An address by John R. Tunis, popular author of young people's books, to the students of Abraham Lincoln High School (New York?), is published in the September, 1943, *Horn Book*. Inspiring reading.

Documents of interest to language arts teachers in the elementary schools: *Around About Us*, an attractive list of out-of-door books for boys and girls prepared by the Children's Books Committee of the Madison Public Schools . . . The *Booklist* of June 1, 1943 is devoted to an annotated bibliography, chiefly for adults, on the United Nations . . . The United States Office of Education publishes an interesting report of the vital project, *Inter-American Education Demonstration Centers* (Leaflet No. 65) . . . Also, from this government office, an excellent annotated list of inexpensive books and pamphlets on the Far East (free) . . . Suggestive to all elementary teachers is the pamphlet *When Our Town Was Young*, stories of North Salem, New York, by boys and girls in the seventh grade of the Central High School of that city . . . An annotated list of books on Latin America for young readers is contained in the American Library Association's *Booklist* for April 1, 1941 . . . (The Hogan and Yeschko list on Latin America, published by the *Elementary English Review*, is still available at this office at fifteen cents each) . . . The United States Treasury in Washington, D. C. will send free a list of war savings materials for schools . . . The Chicago Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc., 135 South La Salle Street, is distributing a pamphlet by Nathan Berman called *The Place of the Child in Present-Day Russia* . . . Annotated sources for curriculum materials on the Far East and an annotated list of periodicals on the Far East for teachers and librarians may be obtained from the U. S. Office of Education.

# Review and Criticism

[The reviews in this issue are by Gertrude Whipple, Helen Laurie, Eloise Rue, Dora V. Smith, Bernardine G. Schmidt, and Dorothy E. Smith. Unsigned annotations are by the editor.]

## NEW FINDINGS ON THE TEACHING OF READING

The value of the metronoscope, the flash-meter, and other mechanical means of increasing an individual's speed in silent reading has recently been the subject of frequent debate. In some educational circles, it has been contended that the essence of training for improvement in speed lies in controlled practice. In other circles, however, the view is emphasized that, since eye movements are merely symptoms of an individual's speed of comprehension in reading, improvement will be obtained only as the individual's ability to comprehend and interpret material is improved. This difference in opinion lends interest to Eloise Boeker Cason's evaluation of controlled reading reported in *Mechanical Methods for Increasing the Speed of Reading*.<sup>1</sup>

This experimental study at the third-grade level was undertaken to determine the relative effectiveness of two reading programs in increasing rate of silent reading. In one of the programs the reading was timed, the child was required to find answers to questions, a check was made of the child's comprehension of the material read, and proper phrasing was emphasized by spacing the phrases and underlining them. The other program stressed metronoscope reading of material at several levels of difficulty. Each of these methods was compared with the method of free library reading. The experiment was of short duration, having been carried on daily over a period of only four weeks. Each of the four groups participating in the experiment included approximately twenty-five pupils.

The test results showed that the programs emphasizing the mechanics of reading produced no significant gains which were not obtained by the free library reading. Since, however, there was some evidence that children of different reading abilities responded in different ways, Cason presents the conclusion, among others, "that an evaluation of the reading status of the individual child"

needs to "be made before a decision is reached to use either of the methods studied."

This report should prove helpful to schools which are attempting to provide suitable emphasis on speed of reading in the middle grades and are concerned about the kinds of equipment which they ought to furnish to regular teachers.

Of much practical interest to teachers and school officials is Ada V. Hyatt's *The Place of Oral Reading in the School Program*,<sup>2</sup> which deals with the history and the development of oral reading in the elementary school from 1880 to 1941. This study involved careful analysis of 411 reports, including yearbooks, professional books, teachers' manuals, courses of study, and accounts of scientific investigations.

The discussion is organized into three main divisions: (1) the period from 1880 to 1914, when oral reading was the prevailing method of reading instruction; (2) the period from 1915 to 1924, when emphasis in classroom instruction shifted from oral-reading to silent-reading techniques; and (3) the modern period from 1925 to the present, when increasing recognition was given to the real contributions of oral reading to the entire school program. Each of these divisions presents concrete descriptions of the methods and the materials used in teaching oral reading, of the forces which produced the trend in the amount of attention given to oral reading, and of the viewpoints concerning silent reading which were current in the period under discussion.

By far the most interesting chapter to teachers is Chapter IV, which is concerned with recent trends in reading. This chapter

<sup>1</sup>Contributions to Education, No. 878. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1943.

<sup>2</sup>Contributions to Education, No. 872. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1943.

includes a helpful discussion of the specific values of oral reading in "educating in comprehension and testing of reading," "in motivating reading," in "providing for remediation," "in developing ability to use the English language," "in improving speech habits," "in developing personality," "in providing for cultural growth," "in providing for social sharing," and in producing other results. This chapter also presents a list of situations in which oral reading may function. To the teacher searching for new ideas this list should be most suggestive.

Though Hyatt's report will be distinctly valuable for the student of the history and the scientific aspects of education, it should be even more useful to teachers and administrators interested in revising reading programs to give oral reading its proper place.

G. W.

*Papers from the Second American Congress on General Semantics. Non-Aristotelian Methodology (Applied) for Sanity in Our Time.* Compiled and edited by M. Kendig. Chicago: Institute of General Semantics, 1943. Pp. 577.

Although this volume serves as an illuminating source-book on the applications of General Semantics to the various sciences, particularly those relating to human development and pathology, its chief interest to readers of this magazine rests in the sections dealing with speech and reading. The implications of General Semantics for the arts of language communication are ably set forth by Irving J. Lee, in a paper on General Semantics and public speaking, G. L. Scott on "Can General Semantics Formulations Be Included in the School Curriculum," David Kopel on reading instruction, O. R. Bontrager on remedial work in reading, Dona W. Brown on language skills in the eighth grade, and Madeline Semmelmyer on reading readiness.

These discussions of a significant and increasingly influential approach to human knowledge are based upon the formulations presented by Alfred Korzybski, head of the Institute of General Semantics, in his major work, *Science and Sanity*. The essential emphasis of the theory for language study consists in the recognition of the functional map-

territory relationship between language and reality.

The bulky volume, replete with technical data from a score of scientific areas, bears the marks of skilled editorial handling.

#### FOR CHILDREN

*Captain Joe and the Eskimo.* By Veotta McKinley Adams. Pictures by Barney Tobey. William R. Scott, \$1.25.

A little Eskimo boy finds himself stranded and all alone on a cake of ice. All he has is his hunting knife and warm clothes. Captain Joe and his crew have plenty of initiative in trying many different ways of rescuing the little boy. The Eskimo boy in turn has plenty of initiative in trying to rescue himself. The story is delightful in its humor, in its surprises, in its human understanding. The pictures clarify the story so well that they are a significant and zestful complement. The book itself is a good size for younger children and is printed in plain manuscript.

H. L.

*The Boy Jones.* By Patricia Gordon. Viking, \$2.00.

Jones was a boy who lived in London in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign. Tall and thin, alone and homeless, poor but bright, happy and friendly, the boy entered into the life of London. Each day Jones had satisfying experiences with his friends of the street. He was resourceful enough to find a school where he learned to read, and had enough initiative to take trips to the zoological gardens, the wax works and even to Buckingham Palace.

H. L.

*The Marines in Review.* By Norman V. Carlisle. Dutton, \$2.50.

This story of marines in action gives information on the various specializations for which a member of the Marines may train. The story of Guadalcanal, Midway, and Wake are partially told. The Marine Corps is described as "the land army of the Navy," "a ground army in itself." "It includes infantry, artillery, engineering units, aviation units, tank organizations, signal and radio troops"—all "constantly alive to experimentation." Best suited to junior and senior high school boys but some younger boys would also be interested in it.

H. L.

*Wenderley.* By Gertrude E. Mallette. Doubleday, Doran, \$2.00.

The story of a trailer camp at a defense industry plant in California. Two college girls—Lesley and Agnes—are living in the camp—the one to look out after her father, the other her two brothers. They get acquainted and spend their time in working out plans for a better camp for all concerned. The story shows the living problems of defense workers in congested areas. It also shows how energetic young people with initiative can help work out human problems. The book is attractive and convincingly written. Young people from twelve to eighteen should enjoy it.

H. L.

*Wartime Opportunities for Men.* By Norman V. Carlisle. Dutton, \$2.50.

This book points out the great variety of jobs open to men in service or defense work. Due to the great need for "mechanized and motorized forces," an opportunity is offered in many fields for specialization. Different kinds of work are described in the army, navy, merchant marine, in war industry, in science and engineering, in agriculture. The emphasis is on opportunities for men in wartime although some of these opportunities will continue in peace time. Naturally the book is factual and is not interesting reading unless a desire to find out opportunities is stimulated by a teacher or felt by some individual pupils.

H. L.

*The Sea Snake.* By Stephen W. Meader. Harcourt, Brace, \$2.00.

American loaf of bread in a wax advertising wrapper retrieved from the wreckage of a Nazi submarine is cause for Barney Cannon to suspect the aloof occupants in the big house of provisioning enemy submarines. Barney is caught spying on the activities of the large estate and is shanghaied aboard a Nazi submarine where he is put to work at menial tasks. During one of the many exciting naval engagements, this one near Atlantic City, he escapes by swimming and is picked up by one of the American patrol boats. Barney gives the United States Navy headquarters important information on the construction of new Nazi submarines, and the whereabouts of a secret base in the Bahamas. This fictional narrative holds the interest. It is fast moving

and the main characters are delineated sufficiently to make their personalities felt. The plot is fantastic as a whole but that does not detract from its purely entertaining nature. Grades 6-9. E. R.

*Man in the Air: The Effect of Flying on the Human Body.* By Herbert S. Zim. Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00.

An interesting book for adults as well as boys interested in military aviation. The stress is on the reaction of the human body to altitude, acceleration and change in direction. Popularly written chapters on associated subjects such as the physics of air, devices to minimize untoward effects, physiology of the ear and eye, prerequisites and pre-flight tests for potential military aviators, make for an adequately treated subject. Contains an up-to-date annotated bibliography, an excellent index, plentiful photographs and diagrams. Suitable for high school and mature junior high school students. E. R.

*Coast Guard, Aboy!* By Philip Harkins. Harcourt, Brace, \$2.00.

When Peter Shute joins the Coast Guard as apprentice seaman, he does not realize how mighty the unconquerable sea is, until he fights the raging surf for the first time. After exciting adventures in rescue work at two stations along the lower East coast, he is transferred to the Harbor Patrol in the New York area, where, one night, the staff boards a Nazi merchantman to prevent further sabotage to the ship by its own crew on the eve of the United States' entry into World War II. His final service on convoy duty aboard a Coast Guard cutter wins him an appointment to the U. S. Coast Guard Academy. This tale is spiced with salt water terminology, holds the interest, and offers information. Grades 6-8. E. R.

*They Fly For Victory.* By Keith Ayling. Thomas Nelson, \$2.50.

This comprehensive parade of air heroes and their exciting experiences beginning with World War I and following with the scores of courageous fliers in the present conflict will interest junior high and senior high students who are air-minded. It will be of special interest to those who seek brief sketches of heroic airmen and their deeds, and secondarily,

an interwoven short history of plane design. If the book were indexed, particularly by names of air heroes, it would be valuable as a reference tool, also. E. R.

*Feeding Our Armed Forces.* By Eleanor Hoffman. Thomas Nelson, \$1.75.

An interesting account of food for the army, beginning with a chapter primarily on mess management, followed by more chapters on the training of bakers and cooks; the food branch of the Quartermaster's Corps and other services. Although this is not a children's book, it may be used by those of all ages as a reference work, or as pleasure reading by civilians who wish to reminisce over the g-o-o-d o-l-d 'd-a-y-s before overextended meat dishes and ersatz butter. E. R.

*The Army In Review.* New Revised Edition. By Curtis L. Erickson. Dutton, \$2.50.

This is the story of Tom and Jerry, two high school youths, who, in order to write realistic themes on army life in camp, obtain permission to enter a nearby training center for a week's stay, go through an accelerated routine of recruits' first steps, and, as special guests, are conducted in tourist-like fashion through the various corps and departments. Though the plot is improbable, it does offer a vehicle for the over-all presentation to boys of pre-induction age a superficial glimpse into army routine and organization. *The Army in Review* is a review and for that reason it is limited in its appeal to only those young readers who would like a general survey interwoven with a light fictional plot. E. R.

*I Want to Fly.* By Anita Brenner. Illustrated by Lucienne Block. William R. Scott, \$1.50.

Bright, bold pictures of two little children who in imagination sweep the skies over land and sea in their little plane. In a world of beautiful picture books, this one stands out because of its skilful integration of text and illustration. Why could not hundreds of thousands of children be reached with it, instead of thousands, at 25 cents instead of \$1.50?

*The Pup Himself.* Written and illustrated by Morgan Dennis. Viking, \$1.00.

"Himself" couldn't have won any blue

ribbons but he won the applause of the audience and the approval of the trainer by his impromptu stage performance, and he will win every child-reader's affection. This canine rags-to-riches tale, charmingly illustrated, is intended for the very young.

*A Child's Good Night Book.* By Margaret Wise Brown. Illustrated by Jean Charot. William R. Scott, \$1.00.

Both the text and the soft colors of the full-page illustrations of this little book succeed in creating the sleeping mood of the bedtime story.

*The Travels of Ching.* By Robert Bright. Illus. by the author. Scott, \$1.25.

Ching was a Chinese doll. A little Chinese girl saw him in a Chinese shop and wanted to have him for her very own. Before he came to her, however, he journeyed all the way to and across America and back again. For all the Chinese background in the story Ching could just as well have traveled from Oshkosh to Timbuctoo. Books that appeal to the same age group and that have an authentic Chinese background have already been written by Eleanor Frances Lattimore, Kurt Wiese, Dorothy Rowe, and several other authors. A full-page picture by the author faces every page of text which sometimes consists of only one line. A pleasant but unimportant little picture book. D. E. S.

*Candy Kane.* By Janet Lambert. Illus. by Robert Pallin. Dutton, \$2.00.

Candace Victoria Kane was a friendly soul; fourteen, not pretty like her older sister, Leigh, but attractive with blonde hair and an inquisitive nose. Whereas Leigh and her mother, Marcia, considered it important to know the "right people," Candy was interested in everybody. When her father, a Major in the Army Reserve, reported for active duty at Fort Benning, Candy went along to keep his company until Marcia and Leigh had completed their social season in New York. Several weeks later they arrived, bored and resentful at having to come, and shocked at Candy's miscellaneous assortment of friends. In the course of time they found that Candy's way of friendliness is the best way after all. The story is gay and alive, full of the kind of people and incidents that girls in their early teen thoroughly enjoy. D. E. S.

*Dragon John.* By Marie A. Lawson. Illus. by the author. Viking, \$1.50.

"The strange tale of a smallish young dragon who was very lonely and most unhappy, but who in the end came to a great and lasting joy." In this delightful story Mrs. Lawson has captured the universal spirit of the folk tale. Her illustrations are exactly right—full of action, color, and humor, with much intriguing detail. While the book is definitely hers in conception and execution, it does remind one of Howard Pyle. What more could one ask?

D. E. S.

*The Vanishing Violin.* By Alison Lee. Lothrop. 1943. \$2.00.

After a distinguished violinist plays at a concert in the Sherburne High School, his Stradivarius violin mysteriously disappears. Phyllis Wilson, who hopes for a music scholarship to study under the direction of the violinist, gets involved in the case and, with her brother and two of her friends, run down many clues.

The book is rather carelessly written. On the last page is the sentence, "Whom do you think could have done it?" We are familiar with "Who-done-its," but this is the first "Whom-did-it" that we have met.

D. E. S.

*Peewee the Mousedeer.* By Leeuw de Hendrick. Illus. by Tibor Gergely. McKay, \$2.00.

Peewee, the mousedeer of the East Indies, plays a role similar to that of the jackal or the fox in other folklore and fables. In fact, he does many of the same things that they do. The illustrations in black and white and green use some of the techniques of the ever-popular comics. They are gay, amusing, and appealing.

D. E. S.

*At Our House.* By John G. McCullough. Illus. by Roger Duvoisin. Scott, \$1.25.

A picture book with a purpose. It presents a typical day in the life of an average family and is meant to reassure little children that "Father is really coming home tonight." One wonders whether it is a coincidence that many of the illustrations are strongly reminiscent of those in *The Little House*, by Virginia Lee Burton, the winner of the 1942 Caldecott medal.

D. E. S.

*The Charm String.* By Besse Torian Palenske and Howard E. Wilson. Illus. by Hamil-

ton Green. American Book Company.

A social studies reader in American history. On her tenth birthday Nancy's Grandmother Dorothea gave her the charm string that had been handed down in the family for more than two hundred years. There is a story for each charm—buttons, coins, keys, and the like. Each story is about some historical incident or famous person from 1635 to 1849.

The type is clear and the black and white illustrations are in keeping with the spirit of the text. Although rather obvious in style and vocabulary the book is an acceptable supplementary reader in schools that have no library and where funds are limited.

D. E. S.

*Fog Magic.* By Julia L. Sauer. Jacket, binding and end-papers by Lynd Ward. Viking, \$2.00.

The Addington family had lived in a little Maine fishing village ever since Colonial times. In each generation there was one member of the family who loved the fog and found therein a kind of magic. In this story Greta is that one. Over the mountain from her home lies Blue Cove, once a thriving village of fisher folk, now deserted, with only cellar-holes to indicate the life of the past. Whenever the fog rolls in Greta, by the force of an inner urge, goes to Blue Cove where she finds the old homes restored and the life of the village going on as it did in the early days of the settlement. Greta sees the villagers and talks with them—the only difference between them being that she knows the ending of all their stories. She visits Blue Cove until her twelfth birthday, but on that magical day she knows she will never be able to go again. On the way home she learns that her father had been the Addington who had gone to the Cove in his generation.

Outlining the story thus baldly is like pulling the wings off a butterfly to find out what makes it fly. It is a gossamer tale of childhood imagination and sensitivity—the dreamland of youth which may be recalled but never recaptured. Adolescence brings to an end that fourth dimensional timelessness that characterizes early youth, for the individual must prepare to take his place in the immediate, tangible, work-a-day world.

Miss Sauer, Head of the Children's De-

partment of the Rochester, New York, Public Library, has proven to be a creative artist as well as an able critic. Librarians can be proud of her. Blue Cove-ites and ex-Blue Cove-ites will be grateful to her. D. E. S.

*The New Pet.* By Marjore Flack. Doubleday, Doran, \$1.50.

Most stories about new babies end with the excitement of their arrival. This one begins there; at least it begins with Dick's showing Judy how to tie her shoes, button her dress, and watch the stop-and-go signs to prove herself grown-up enough to have a pet. Then Grandmother comes to keep house while Mother is at the hospital. Everyone is preparing for the arrival of the new pet. But what is it to be? If it's a bird, it needs a cage; if it's a bunny, an outdoor pen; if it's a fish, a bowl of water; but if it's a baby, it needs a warm basket bed. All these things are pictured with typical Marjorie Flack illustrations. But best of all is the second half of the story. The children are disappointed in the baby. It can't see. It can't hold its head up. It doesn't know what words mean. What good is a baby for a pet? Then the author-illustrator pictures the progress of the infant, each stage more attractive than one before, until the proud day when he leaves his playpen and trots off with a hand in his brother's and one in his sister's. The psychology of the story is extraordinarily good. Children will love the book and will unconsciously be helped by it to wait with a patience until baby brothers and sisters grow up. The simple, colorful pictures make the story doubly attractive. The book fills a real need.

D. V. S.

*Back to School with Betsy.* By Carolyn Haywood. Harcourt, \$2.00.

There is real vitality in these normal third grade children—two girls and a boy, (and in their dog, Thumpy) as they earn money for a wedding present for their favorite teacher, play flower girls at the wedding, and eat their first refreshments "standing up." After the wedding, school begins. The unit on Mexico, the proud owner of a sombrero who performs at the party, the tragedy of the new janitor's erasing the picture from the blackboard—all give a surprising zest to the normal activities of school life. The relations of teacher and pupils are sensible and happy. Business is business, but it's fun too. The grade climax comes when Daisy, the Easter chick, who is to lay eggs that will put money in the school fund, emits her first cock-a-doodle-do.

Third grade children can read this little story for themselves, and they will find themselves in it. Chuckles abound—chuckles which show how well the author knows children. Best of all, the illustrations prove that fact beyond a doubt. It is a wholesome, entertaining story which third grade children who have gone through first and second grade with Betsy will relish as they have done the previous volumes. D. V. S.

*Molly and the Tool Shed.* By Sally Scott. Harcourt, \$1.50.

This slight little story of an independent lamb who chose the tool house as a home for herself and her children, grand children, and greatgrandchildren has attractive illustrations in tones of gray, which will endear it to children. It will be a useful addition to the easy books which primary children can read for themselves. D. V. S.

## THE CHILDREN'S OPINION OF COMIC BOOKS

(Continued from page 331)

"There are not many Comics that have good laughs, but these do."

Practically all children go through a period of a few months when they want to read nothing else. Most of them outgrow this in the upper grades and read Comics only occa-

sionally. Only a few high school students continue to rely on Comics as their sole source of reading material.

Reading Comics has no particularly lasting influence on character formation.

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